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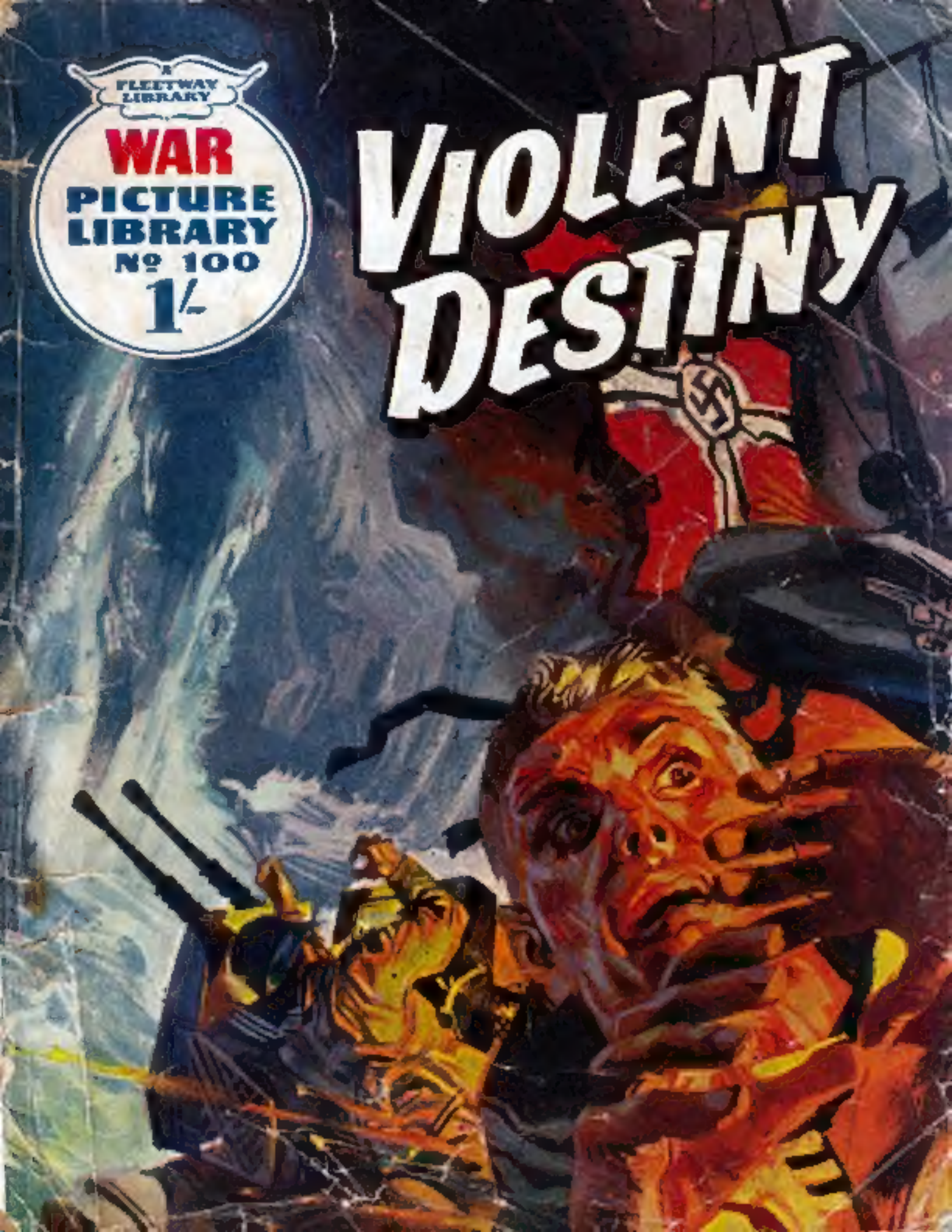

4 ALL-ACTION ISSUES EVERY MONTH

★ No. 13 **BATTLE ORDER**
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★ No. 14 **THE QUICK—AND THE DEAD**
They gave him a gun—and made him a killer !

★ No. 15 **STAND UP AND FIGHT**
They reached breaking point—on the bloodsoaked road to Mandalay !

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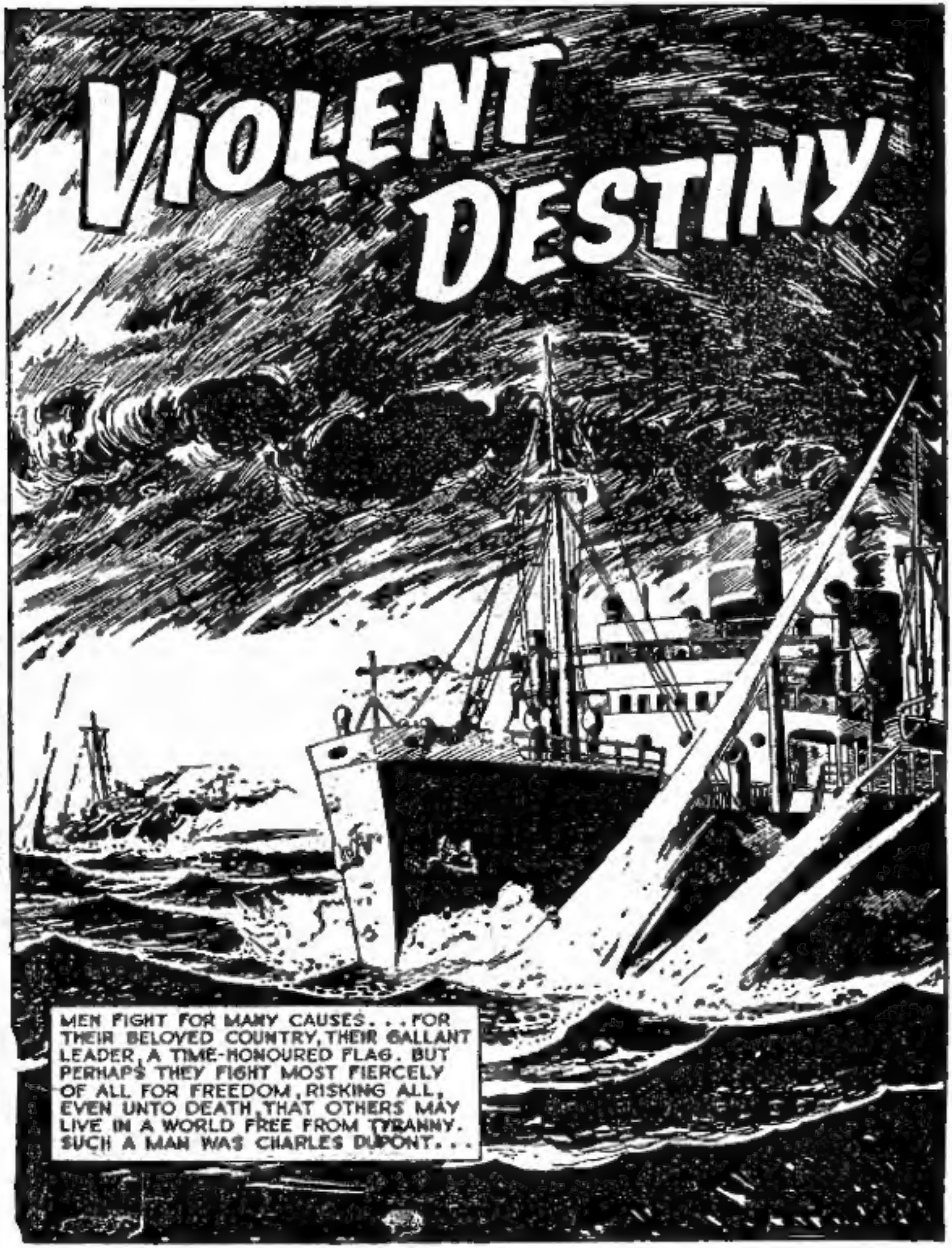

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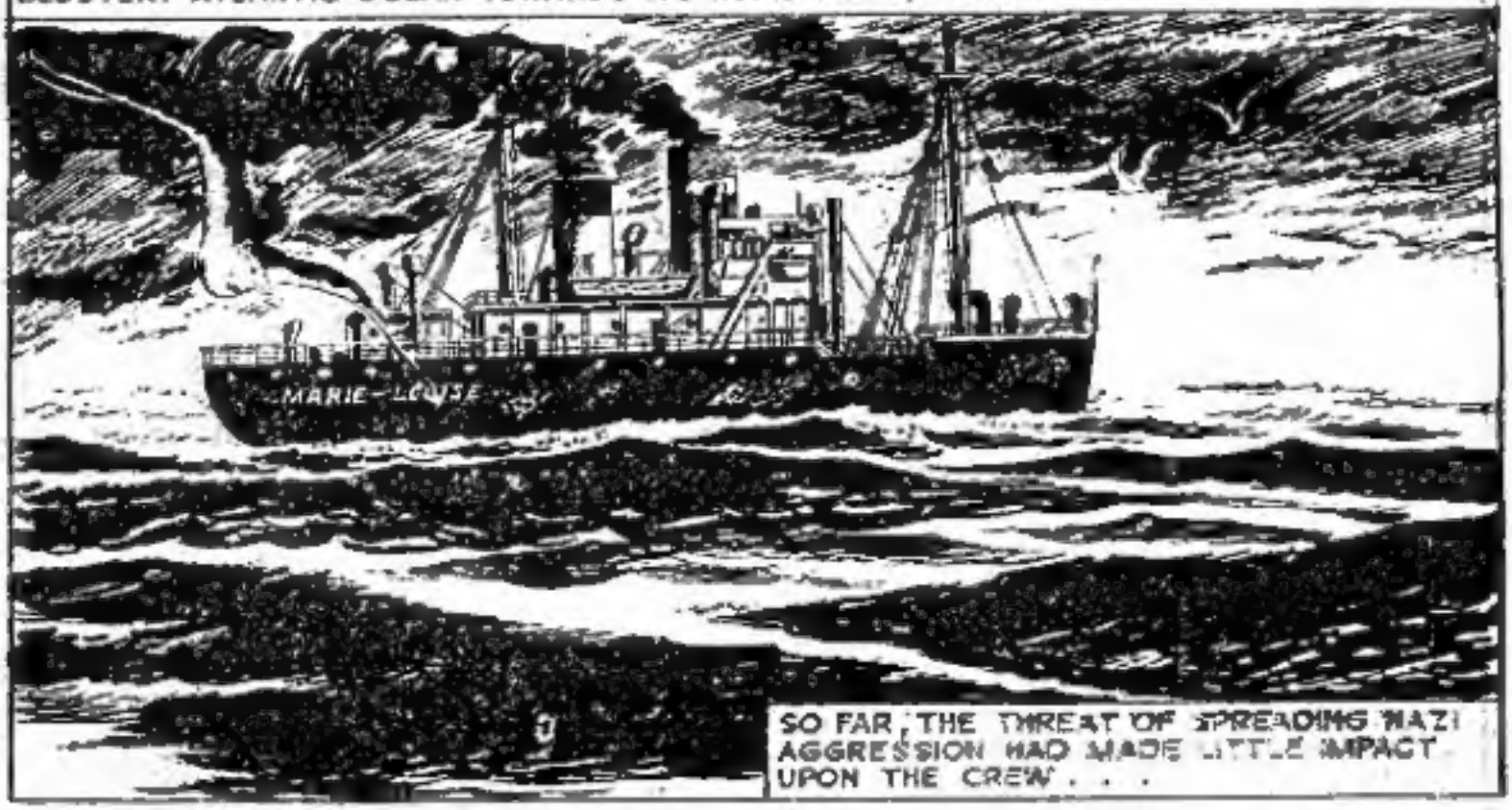
Chapter 1. The Wreck

A FEW SHORT WEEKS AFTER THE EPIC RETREAT FROM DUNKIRK, A BATTERED FRENCH TRAMP STEAMER, THE *MARIE-LOUISE*, WAS CLAWING ITS WAY SLOWLY EAST OUT OF A BLUSTERY ATLANTIC OCEAN TOWARDS ITS HOME PORT, CHERBOURG.



THE SKIPPER, CAPTAIN CHARLES DUPONT, HAD ONLY ONE IDEA IN HIS HEAD. HE WANTED TO GET BACK TO HIS NATIVE VILLAGE NEAR BORDEAUX AND MEET OLD FRIENDS.
LET ME SIP COGNAC OUTSIDE PAPA LIMARD'S ESTAMINET WHERE I CAN SEE THE GIRLS GETTING SUNBURNT IN THE VINEYARDS BELOW. THAT'S FOR ME!
LET US HOPE THERE WON'T BE ANY NASTY SHOCKS AWAITING YOU IN A FRANCE BENEATH THE HEEL OF THE BOCHE, CAPITAINE.

BUT SHOCKS WERE IMMINENT FOR DUPONT FROM THE WAR AND THE WEATHER. AT THAT MOMENT, A GERMAN PLANE, ON PATROL LOOKING FOR BRITISH SHIPPING, WAS HEADING TOWARDS THE SHIP. . .
HIMMEL! A SITTING TARGET, KURT. JUST IN TIME FOR A QUICK SINKING BEFORE THE WEATHER BREAKS . . . STAND BY.

RUNNING IN TOWARDS THE SHIP'S PORT BOW, THE PLANE RELEASED ITS BOMB-LOAD AND THE FIRST EXPLOSIONS RATTLED THE RUSTY PLATES IN THE TRAMP'S SIDE.
IT'S A GERMAN. I CAN SEE THE SWASTIKA!
STOP PORT ENGINE, WHEEL HARD-A-PORT!
ALTHOUGH UNVERSED IN WAR TACTICS, DUPONT REACTED LIKE A TRUE SHIP'S MASTER, HEADING HIS SHIP TOWARDS THE FIRST BOMB BURSTS.

TWO MORE BOMBS WHINED TOWARDS THEM AND WATER SHOWERED OVER THE MARIE-LOUISE, SO CLOSE DID THEY LAND.
PARBLEU! THAT WAS CLOSE.

THE HOSTILE PLANE TURNED AWAY AS THE LAST TWO BOMBS FELL HARMLESSLY ASTERN. DUPONT'S MANOEUVRE HAD PAID OFF AND THE DANGER HAD BEEN THWARTED.

WHAT PRICE THE BOCHES NOW, SIR ?

OH, I DON'T KNOW. THEY MUST HAVE MISTAKEN US FOR THE BRITISH. RESUME COURSE FOR CHERBOURG.

BUT ALREADY THE FURIOUS ELEMENTS OF NATURE WERE CONSPIRING TO THWART THE SKIPPER'S MUCH-DESERVED HOMECOMING.

AN URGENT MESSAGE SAYS THERE'S A GALE FORCE WIND BLOWING FROM DUE SOUTH OUT OF BISCAY, MON CAPITAINE !

A CRUEL, RELENTLESS BEAM SEA, BOOSTED BY THE SOUTHERLY GALE, WAS SWEEPING THEM STEADILY TOWARDS THAT ROCK-RIDDEN CORNISH COASTLINE BELOVED BY WRECKERS IN THE PAST.

I DON'T LIKE THIS AT ALL ! WE'RE BEING DRIVEN FAR TOO CLOSE TO THE PLACE THE BRITISH CALL THE LIZARD.

AND THE ENGINES ARE STRAINED TO THE LIMIT.

DUPONT WAS DEEPLY AWARE OF HIS SHIP'S PERILOUS POSITION. HE ORDERED AN EMERGENCY SIGNAL TO BE SENT OUT.

S.O.S. . . S.O.S. FRENCH STEAMSHIP *MARIE-LOUISE*, BOUND FOR CHERBOURG. WE ARE IN SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES . . . POSITION AS FOLLOWS . . .

AND AT THAT CRITICAL MOMENT, THE *MARIE-LOUISE'S* ENGINES FAILED HER.

PORT ENGINES PACKED UP THROUGH OVERHEATING! NOT A CHANCE OF GETTING HER GOING AGAIN QUICKLY. . .

WITH THE FAILURE OF THE ENGINE, DUPONT HAD FORCED UPON HIM ONE OF THE DECISIONS WHICH ALL SHIPS' MASTERS DREAD.

CLOSE DOWN THE OTHER ENGINE . . . AND CLEAR THE ENGINE ROOM, ON THE DOUBLE! *HANDS TO ABANDON SHIP STATIONS!*

THE LOSS OF ENGINE POWER AT SUCH A CRUCIAL MOMENT PRECIPITATED THE MARIE-LOUISE'S DOOM. THE MOMENT THE BOATS TOUCHED THE WATER THEY WERE TOSSED AWAY FROM THE SHIP'S SIDE LIKE DRIFTWOOD IN A STORM. AND DUPONT WAS STILL ABOARD . . .

AND FOR THOSE IN THE LIFEBOATS, THE SEA WAS LIKE A LIVING THING, ALL THE TIME STRIVING TO SNATCH THEIR FRAIL CRAFT INTO ITS GREEN DEPTHS.

DUPONT HAD BEEN MAKING CERTAIN THAT THERE WAS NO ONE LEFT ABOARD HIS STRICKEN SHIP. AS HE STRUGGLED UP THE DECK, A HUGE WAVE FLUNG THE *MARIE-LOUISE* ON TO A HIDDEN CLUSTER OF ROCKS.
SHE'S AGROUND! I *MUST* GET CLEAR!

THE SHIP WAS SHUDDERING WITH EVERY CRASHING WAVE THAT BROKE OVER HER. DUPONT CUT DOWN A RAFT AND MANHANDLED IT TOWARDS THE RAIL.

HE SHINNED DOWN A ROPE INTO THE RAFT AND WAS FORCED TO HANG ON FOR DEAR LIFE AS IT TOSSED AND TURNED IN THE SEETHING, BOILING SEA.
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THE FIERCE UNDERTOW WHICH HASTENED THE STEAMER'S DOOM NOW WORKED IN THE FRENCHMAN'S FAVOUR THE PUNY RAFT WAS WHIRLED HELPLESSLY BUT SAFELY ROUND THE HEADLAND AND TOSSED UP ON A BEACH. THERE DUPONT WAS RESCUED BY TWO COASTGUARDS.

AFTER THREE DAYS REST IN HOSPITAL RECOVERING FROM SHOCK, DUPONT SOUGHT OUT THE COASTGUARDS ONE OF WHOM TOOK HIM TO THE SCENE OF THE WRECK

SHE SLID OFF WITH THE EBB TIDE AND SANK IN TWENTY FATHOMS JUST BEYOND THE ROCKS. YOUR BOATS WERE WASHED UP YESTERDAY, CAPTAIN DUPONT...YOU WERE THE ONLY SURVIVOR!

ALL MY BRAVE CREW, SO EAGER TO GET HOME... AND NOW..

SITTING IN AN ENGLISH AIR RAID SHELTER WHILE GERMAN INCENDIARIES RAINED DOWN ON A NEARBY POWER STATION, DUPONT TASTED HIS FIRST EXPERIENCE OF WAR. HE FOUND IT ALL RATHER UNREAL.

OFF

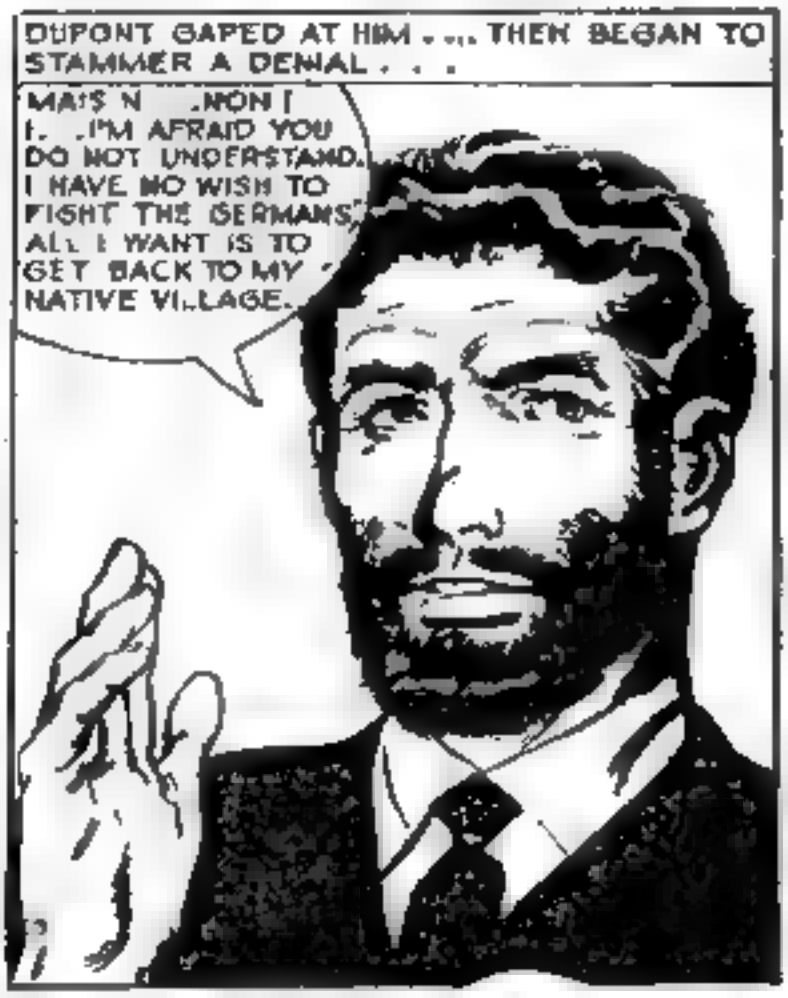
THIS ISN'T MY WAR .. AND THE SOONER I GET ACROSS THE CHANNEL THE BETTER I'LL LIKE IT. THERE'S NOTHING TO KEEP ME HERE NOW THE *MARIE-LOUISE* HAS GONE

TWO DAYS LATER, DUPONT TOOK TRAIN FOR A FAMOUS SOUTH COAST NAVAL BASE ARMED WITH HIS TEMPORARY IDENTITY CARD AND RATION BOOK. THE FRIENDLY COASTGUARD SAW HIM OFF
THAT LETTER TO THE DOCKYARD SUPERINTENDENT WILL HELP, CHARLES. HE'S AN OLD FRIEND OF MINE
GOODBYE, MON AMI, AND THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU'VE DONE...

DUPONT'S SPIRITS SOARED AS THE TRAIN RATTLED ON TO ITS DESTINATION. HE FELT HE WAS ON HIS WAY TO FREEDOM, LEAVING BEHIND THE GHASTLY HAPPENINGS OF THE PAST FEW DAYS. BUT THE TREND OF HIS FELLOW PASSENGERS' CONVERSATION STARTLED HIM.
I SEE THE R.A.F BOMBED CALAIS AND BOULOGNE AGAIN LAST NIGHT.
THEY MUST EXPECT IT WITH THE GERMANS ATTACKING OUR SHIPPING FROM FRENCH PORTS!

DUPONT WAS STILL RAGING INWARDLY AT THE ENGLISH PEOPLE'S CALM ACCEPTANCE OF THE BOMBING OF THEIR FORMER ALLIES WHEN HE REACHED THE DOCKYARD SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE.
O.H.M.S.
THIS IS CAPTAIN DUPONT, SIR.
COME IN, DUPONT I'M MANNERS, DOCKS SUPERINTENDENT GLAD TO KNOW YOU

THE SUPERINTENDENT GRINNED GENIALLY AT THE STURDY, BEARDED FRENCHMAN . . .
YOU'VE HAD A TOUGH TIME I BET YOU CAN'T WAIT TO JOIN THE FREE FRENCH ARMED FORCES AND HAVE A CRACK AT THE GERMANS!


DUPONT GAPED AT HIM . . . . THEN BEGAN TO STAMMER A DENIAL . . .
MAIS N .NON I I. .I'M AFRAID YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND. I HAVE NO WISH TO FIGHT THE GERMANS, ALL I WANT IS TO GET BACK TO MY NATIVE VILLAGE.

IT WAS THE TURN OF THE SUPERINTENDENT TO STARE IN AMAZEMENT. . .

WHAT! THAT IS QUITE OUT OF THE QUESTION! YOU WOULDN'T BE ALLOWED TO MAKE YOUR WAY BACK TO FRANCE. IT'S IN THE HANDS OF THE GERMANS. . . OUR ENEMIES *AND* YOURS.

HOW CAN I EVER MAKE HIM UNDERSTAND? HE'S JUST LIKE ALL THE OTHER BRITISH. . .

FURTHER ARGUMENT PROVED FRUITLESS AND DUPONT SHRUGGED RESIGNEDLY AS THE SUPERINTENDENT CUT THE INTERVIEW SHORT. . . WHAT DUPONT WAS ASKING SEEMED TO HIM TO BE PERFECTLY REASONABLE. ALTHOUGH HE HAD PICKED UP A FINE COMMAND OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN HIS TRAVELS, HE WAS BEGINNING TO SEE THAT HE WOULD GET NOWHERE WITH THE BRITISH AUTHORITIES THEY SIMPLY WOULD NOT ACCEPT HIS POINT OF VIEW.

YOU'VE HAD A BAD SHOCK, DUPONT, LOSING YOUR SHIP AND YOUR CREW. THE BEST THING YOU CAN DO TO FORGET IS TO TAKE A JOB IN THE YARD. GO AND SEE THE PERSONNEL OFFICER TOMORROW. TELL HIM I SENT YOU.

AS HE LEFT THE DOCKYARD, DUPONT'S SPIRITS REACHED THEIR LOWEST EBB

ME, DUPONT, WITH A MASTER'S TICKET, OFFERED A LANDLUBBER'S JOB IN A DOCKYARD. PAH! WHAT FURTHER INSULT CAN THE BRITISH GIVE ME?

THAT EVENING, DUPONT BOOKED A ROOM IN A SAILORS' HOSTEL. THEN, FEELING LONELY, HE WANDERED OUT INTO THE STRANGE TOWN IN SEARCH OF COMPANY. IN A SMOKY LITTLE PUBLIC HOUSE HE SUDDENLY SAW A FAMILIAR FIGURE, DRESSED IN SEAMAN'S CLOTHES.
SURELY THAT'S OLD JEAN ARNAUD FROM BACK HOME!

DUPONT STARTED FORWARD, A CRY OF DELIGHTED RECOGNITION ON HIS LIPS...
JEAN! JEAN ARNAUD!

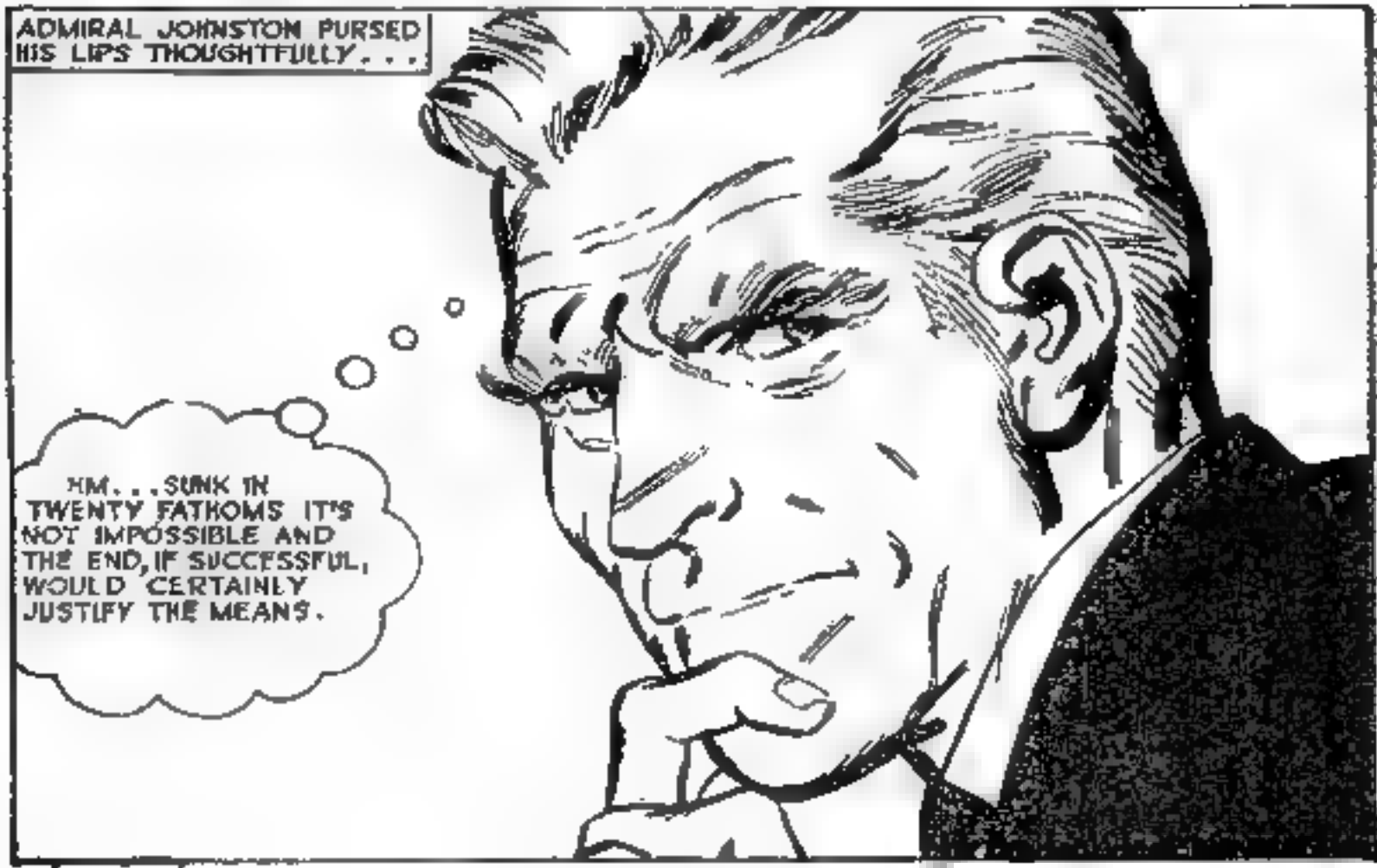
THE OTHER MAN WAS SO SLOW IN RETURNING HIS GREETING THAT DUPONT WONDERED IF HE COULD HAVE MADE A MISTAKE
SURELY YOU RECOGNISE YOUR OLD BOYHOOD PAL, JEAN? I'M CHARLES DUPONT.
WHY, CHARLES, MY OLD ONE! HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WEARING THAT BLACK MAT ON YOUR CHIN?

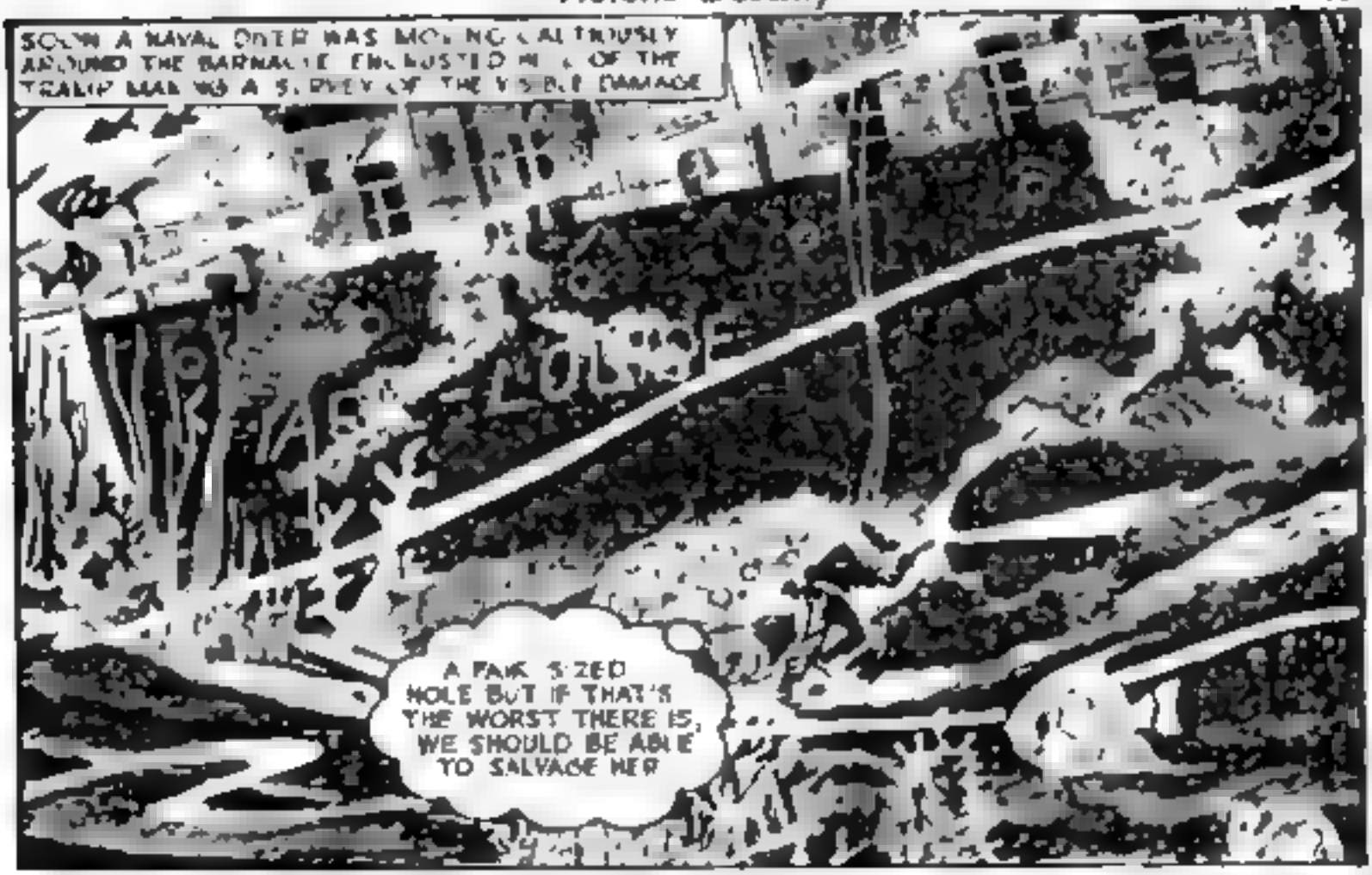
DUPONT'S LONELINESS DISSOLVED AS THEY CHATTED HE FOUND THAT ARNAUD WAS IN EXACTLY THE SAME FIX AS HIMSELF . . A FRENCH SEAMAN NOT PERMITTED TO RETURN TO HIS NATIVE LAND
. . . IN SHORT, THE OLD FELLOW EXPECTED ME TO DON UNIFORM STRAIGHT AWAY TO FIGHT THE GERMANS!
PAH. THESE BRITISH! ALL WE ASK IS THAT WE SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO RETURN HOME. OUR WAR IS OVER AND DONE WITH

AN HOUR LATER, ARNAUD GLANCED AT HIS WATCH. THE TIME HAD PASSED QUICKLY. HE HAD TO HURRY AWAY TO HIS NIGHTSHIFT WORK IN A MUNITION FACTORY
MEET ME HERE TOMORROW, CHARLES. MY LANDLADY MAY HAVE A ROOM FOR YOU
I'LL DO THAT, JEAN. ADIEU!

THE FOLLOWING DAY A HARASSED DOCKYARD PERSONNEL OFFICER HUSTLED THE RELUCTANT DUPONT INTO A SOUL-DESTROYING STORES CLERK'S JOB IN A DINGY WAREHOUSE.
I MIGHT JUST AS WELL HAVE GONE DOWN WITH THE *MARIE-LOUISE* AS BE STUCK HERE FOR THE DURATION OF THE WAR...

CHARLES DUPONT WOULD HAVE BEEN STAGGERED IF HE COULD HAVE HEARD A SECRET DISCUSSION GOING ON IN NAVAL INTELLIGENCE H Q LONDON, AT THAT MOMENT.
MARIE-LOUISE
JEANNE-ESTELLA
YOU SEE, SIR, THEY'RE IDENTICAL!
YES, YES, I GET YOUR POINT. AND YOU SAY THE MARIE-LOUISE WAS SUNK OFF CORNWALL LESS THAN A WEEK AGO?


ADMIRAL JOHNSTON PURSED HIS LIPS THOUGHTFULLY . . .
HM . . . SUNK IN TWENTY FATHOMS IT'S NOT IMPOSSIBLE AND THE END, IF SUCCESSFUL, WOULD CERTAINLY JUSTIFY THE MEANS.


SOON A NAVAL DIVER WAS MOVING CAUTIOUSLY AROUND THE BARNACLE ENCRUSTED HULL OF THE TRAMP MAKING A SURVEY OF THE VISIBLE DAMAGE
A FAIR SIZED HOLE BUT IF THAT'S THE WORST THERE IS, WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO SALVAGE HER

AN URGENT SIGNAL WAS SENT OFF TO THE ADMIRALTY AS SOON AS THE INSPECTION WAS COMPLETED
ALL WE NEED, THEN, IS ABOUT THREE DAYS' PERFECT WEATHER AND A LOT OF LUCK, SIR.
THAT'S ABOUT IT, SUB, THOUGH WHAT THE ADMIRALTY WANT TO BOTHER WITH AN OLD TRAMP LIKE THAT FOR, I CAN'T THINK SHE ISN'T MUCH TO LOOK AT.

THE SALVAGE DIVERS' IRKSOME AND LONELY WORK OFTEN SUFFERED THROUGH INCLEMENT WEATHER. BUT ON THIS OCCASION LUCK WAS WITH THEM. THEY WERE ABLE TO SEAL MANY COMPARTMENTS AND BLOW OUT THE SEA-WATER WITH COMPRESSED AIR.

TWENTY-FOUR HOURS LATER, THE MARIE-LOUISE WAS TOWED UNCEREMONIOUSLY INTO THE NEAREST NAVAL BASE.
HELLO, HELLO, WHAT HAVE WE HERE? LOOKS LIKE ANOTHER RELIC FOR THE MARITIME MUSEUM!

IN THAT SAME NAVAL BASE, CHARLES DUPONT WAS JUST MAKING HIS WAY BACK TO THE STORE AFTER ANOTHER AIR RAID WHEN THE DOCKYARD SUPERINTENDENT HAILED HIM.
HA, DUPONT! BE GOOD ENOUGH TO STEP ROUND TO THE DRY DOCK WITH ME. I'VE GOT SOMETHING RATHER IMPORTANT TO SHOW YOU

THE BATTERED TRAMP WAS ALREADY IN THE DRY DOCK AND A PARTY FROM THE DOCKYARD WAS ASSESSING THE EXTENT OF THE DAMAGE
MA FOI! THE MARIE LOUISE! I CAN HARDLY BE! EVE MY EYES! HOW EVER IS THIS POSSIBLE SUPERINTENDENT?
I THOUGHT YOU'D BE PLEASED, DUPONT THE ADMIRALTY HAVE STARTED TO TAKE A GREAT INTEREST IN HER

DUPONT'S EXCITED EYES KEPT STRAYING BACK TO HIS BELOVED SHIP AS THOUGH TO CONFIRM THAT SHE WAS REALLY THERE. HE FOUND IT HARD TO TAKE IN WHAT THE SUPERINTENDENT WAS TELLING HIM
THE LORDS OF THE ADMIRALTY WANT YOU TO MAKE A TRIP UP TO LONDON. I THINK YOU'LL FIND THEY HAVE A PROPOSITION TO PUT TO YOU BUT FOR THE PRESENT KEEP ALL THIS STRICTLY TO YOURSELF.
THOUGHT THE MARIE-LOUISE HAD GONE FOR GOOD MAYBE I'VE FIGURED THESE BRITISH ALL WRONG...

THE FOLLOWING MORNING, THE CHIEF OF NAVAL INTELLIGENCE AWAITED DUPONT'S ARRIVAL.
IF THIS FRENCHMAN WON'T DO IT, SIR, I SUPPOSE YOU'LL HAVE TO PUT ONE OF OUR MEN IN?
YES, YES, BUT IT'S BETTER DUPONT TAKES COMMAND. THE FREE FRENCH CREW WILL WORK BETTER UNDER ONE OF THEIR OWN COUNTRYMEN.

WHEN THE ADMIRAL'S SECRETARY USHERED DUPONT INTO THE ROOM HE WAS GREETED CORDIALLY BY ADMIRAL JOHNSTON . . .
MAY I SAY I AM DELIGHTED THAT YOU HAVE RAISED MY SHIP, SIR?
WE THINK THERE MAY STILL BE IMPORTANT WORK FOR HER TO DO, CAPTAIN DUPONT I TAKE IT YOU WOULD WISH TO COMMAND HER AGAIN?

THE ADMIRAL WENT ON TO WARN DUPONT THAT WHAT FOLLOWED WAS IN THE STRICTEST CONFIDENCE . . .
WE INTEND TO PASS OFF THE MARIE-LOUISE AS HER SISTER SHIP, THE JEAN-ESTELLE, WHICH THE GERMANS ARE USING REGULARLY FOR COASTAL WORK. SHE IS TO BE LOADED WITH EXPLOSIVES AND DELIBERATELY CRASHED INTO THE HEAVILY CONCRETED SUBMARINE PENS AT LORIENT.
BUT THIS WILL MEAN THE END OF THE MARIE-LOUISE, AFTER YOU HAVE TAKEN SUCH TROUBLE TO RAISE HER FROM THE SEA BED!
SHE HAS BEEN RAISED FOR JUST THIS PURPOSE, CAPTAIN! IF THE MISSION IS SUCCESSFUL THOUSANDS OF ALLIED LIVES WILL BE SAVED!

DUPONT HAD STARTED TO FEEL ILL AT-EASE AGAIN. THEY WERE ASKING HIM TO TAKE ACTIVE, EVEN SUICIDAL ACTION AGAINST THE GERMANS.
BUT I HAVE ALREADY SAID, GENTLEMEN, I DO NOT WISH TO FIGHT THE GERMANS ! DO NOT LOOK UPON THEM AS MY ENEMIES.
WE HAVE A TOUGH CREW OF FREE FRENCH VOLUNTEERS ALL READY, CAPTAIN IF YOU DON'T COMMAND THE SHIP, A BRITISH OFFICER WILL HAVE TO BE APPOINTED.

NO SPEEDY RETURN TO FRANCE . . . AND ANOTHER IN COMMAND OF HIS SHIP IF HE DID NOT AGREE TO FIGHT DUPONT SCARCELY KNEW WHAT TO SAY AS THE STARTLING INTERVIEW ENDED.
THE REFIT WILL TAKE A FEW MONTHS, CAPTAIN GET IN TOUCH WITH ME IF YOU DECIDE TO FALL IN WITH OUR PLANS.
VERY WELL, SIR, I'LL DO THAT.

THE RETURN JOURNEY WAS DRAGGED OUT BY FREQUENT STOPS FOR AIR RAIDS! WEARY AND DISGRUNTLED, DUPONT SOUGHT OUT HIS FRIEND, JEAN ARNAUD, ON ARRIVAL.
ALL RIGHT, DON'T TELL ME. I GUESS THEY INTEND TO USE THE MARIE-LOUISE AGAINST THE GERMANS. YOU ARE DISAPPOINTED. YOU THOUGHT THEY WERE GOING TO LET YOU GO OFF TO YOUR HOME PORT WITH NO STRINGS ATTACHED.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT I'D DO IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, MON AMI? I'D PRETEND TO GO ALONG WITH THE BRITISH. TAKE THE SHIP TO SEA... THEN SAIL HER TO WHEREVER I WANTED TO GO!

ARNAUD'S BOLD WORDS HAD A PROFOUND EFFECT UPON DUPONT YET HE WONDERED ENDLESSLY, IF SUCH A COURSE OF ACTION WOULD TROUBLE HIS CONSCIENCE
IF I DID THIS THING WE TALKED OF, JEAN. WOULD YOU COME WITH ME?
OF COURSE MY OLD ONE I'M DYING TO GET BACK TO THE VILLAGE JUST LIKE YOU ARE . . . SO LONG, NOW

THE FOLLOWING DAY DUPONT SOUGHT OUT THE DOCKYARD SUPERINTENDENT AND TOLD HIM OF HIS DECISION HAVING SPOKEN HIS MIND, HE FELT HAPPIER THAN HE HAD BEEN FOR WEEKS.
WHEN THE MARIE-LOUISE PUTS TO SEA I MUST BE WITH HER. I COULDN'T BEAR TO SEE ANOTHER GO IN MY PLACE.
WE WERE HOPING YOU'D SEE THINGS THAT WAY. I'LL PUT A MESSAGE THROUGH TO THE ADMIRALTY AT ONCE.

Chapter 2. Not His War

THE ADMIRAL AND H.S CHIEF ASS STANT FROM INTELLIGENCE H Q CAME ON BOARD FOR A FINAL BRIEFING, WHICH TOOK PLACE IN THE WARDROOM
.YOU SHOULD REACH LORIENT AT 0-FOUR HUNDRED. THE SUBMARINE PENS ARE HERE THE OPERATION IS HAZARDOUS, BUT ALLIED SHIPPING LOSSES HAVE BEEN ALMOST DISASTROUS LATELY, DUE TO THESE U BOATS..

THE FOLLOWING WEEK, THE MARIE LOUISE SLIPPED AWAY FROM THE BASE ON A SOUTHERLY COURSE, HEADING FOR THE BRITTANY COAST
DO YOU INTEND TO GO THROUGH WITH THE OPERATION, CHARLES?
I...I CAN'T MAKE UP MY MIND, JEAN I'D STILL LIKE TO GET HOME IN ONE PIECE.

MAYBE SOMETHING WILL HAPPEN TO GIVE YOU THE EXCUSE YOU SEEK, MY FRIEND

THAT AFTERNOON, A SQUADRON OF BRITISH BOMBERS TOOK A LOOK AT THEM. BUT AFTER A SHORT INSPECTION, THEY FLEW ON TOWARDS FRANCE WITHOUT MAKING AN ATTACK.
I'M GLAD THEY DIDN'T DECIDE TO TEST US OUT, BONNARD.
NO DOUBT THEY HAVE BEEN WARNED OF OUR IDENTITY.

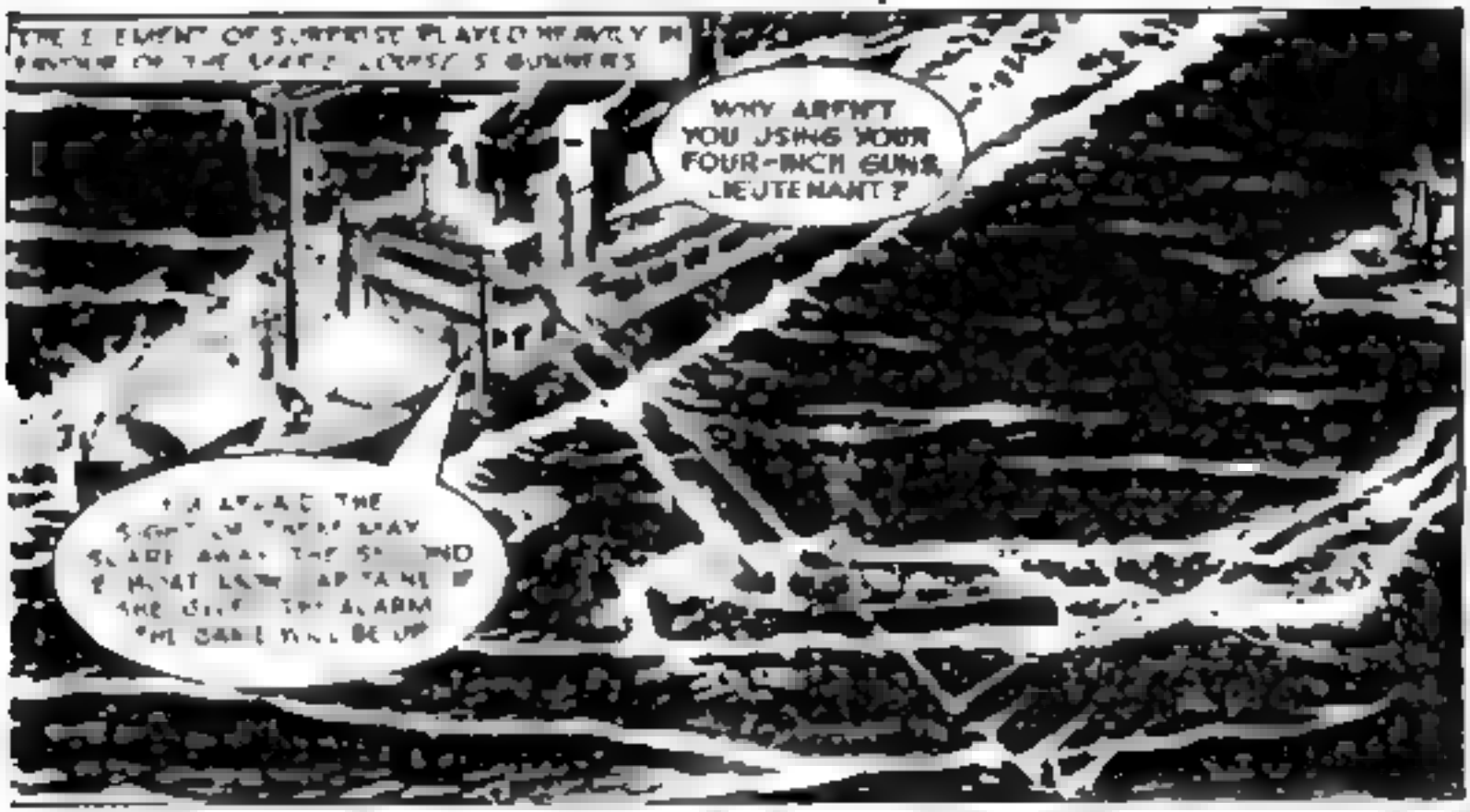
WITH DARKNESS THEY WERE SOUTH OF USHANT. AHEAD LAY THE HOSTILE SHORE OF FRANCE AND BEFORE LONG, TWO PATROLLING GERMAN E-BOATS SPED CHALLENGINGLY TOWARDS THE MARIE LOUISE
ACHTUNG! UNIDENTIFIED MERCHANT SHIP ON THE STARBOARD BOW, KAPITAN!

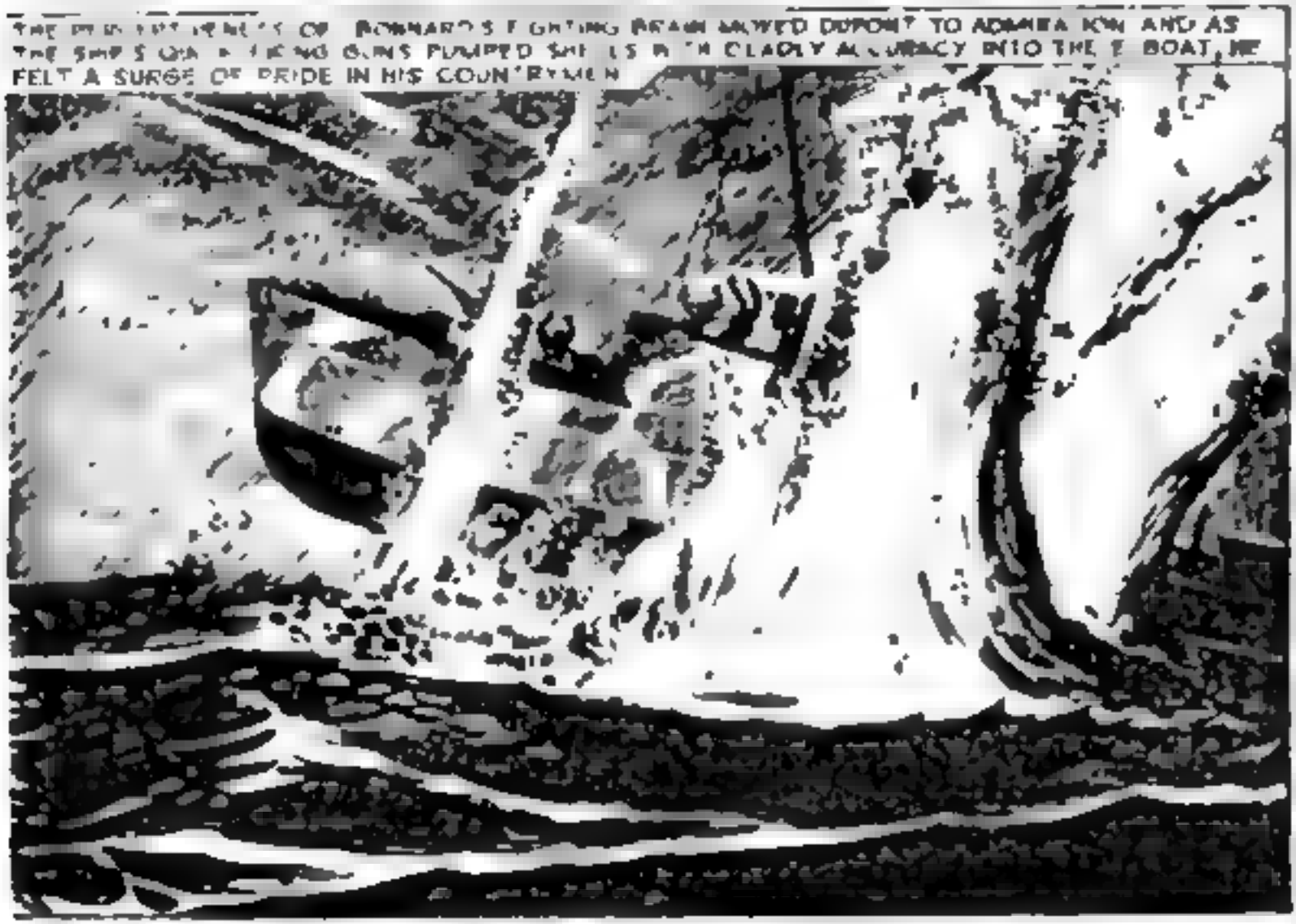
Violent Destiny

STAY ON THE ALERT, MEN, I DO NOT TRUST
IF THE GERMANS FIRE ON US THE
FRENCHMEN PREPARED TO FIGHT BACK.

DIRECT YOUR FIRE AT THE BRIDGE FIRST, OPEN FIRE!

A HAIL OF CANNON SHELLS AND MACHINE-GUN BULLETS SWEPT THE BRIDGE OF THE MARIE-LOUISE, FORCING DUPONT AND THE OTHERS TO FLING THEMSELVES INTO COVER. DUPONT WAS TAKEN ABACK BY THE SUDDENNESS OF THE ATTACK. IT SEEMED THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO FIGHT THE GERMANS WHETHER HE WANTED TO OR NOT.
WELL, MON CAPITAINE, DO WE FIRE BACK?
IF THEY HIT THE EXPLOSIVE WE CARRY, WE'LL BE BLOWN TO PIECES. YES, BONNARD, STAND TO YOUR GUNS!
A LOOK OF GRIM SATISFACTION ON HIS FACE, BONNARD STEPPED TO THE BRIDGE MICROPHONE . . .
MAN THE OERLIKONS! ON THE DOUBLE! OPEN FIRE ON THE FIRST E-BOAT AS SOON AS YOU CAN BEAR! DO NOT REVEAL THE FOUR-INCH!
SO! THE DIE IS CAST! FOR GOOD OR ILL!

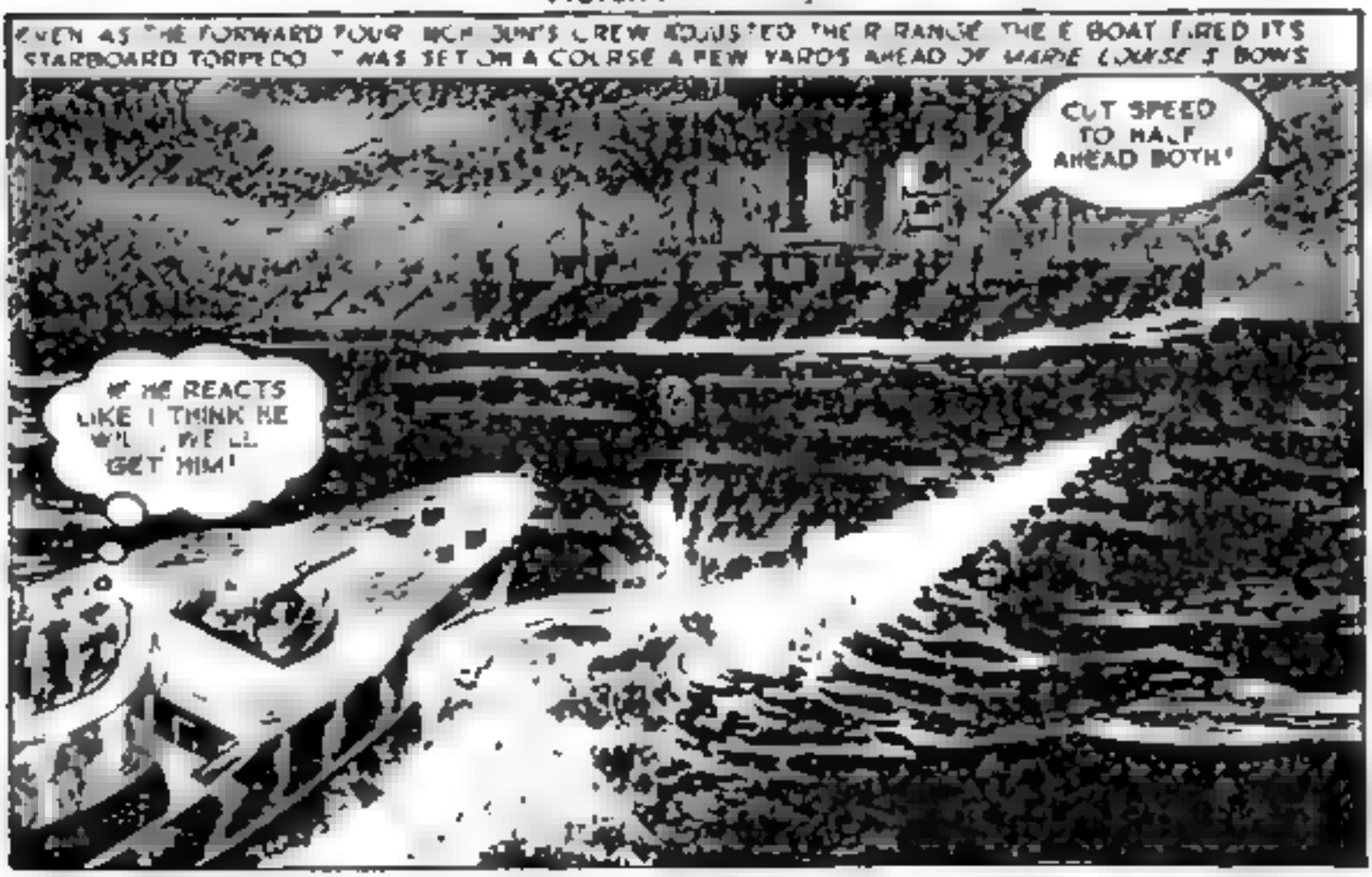

WHY AREN'T YOU USING YOUR FOUR-INCH GUNS, LIEUTENANT?


FELT A SURGE OF PRIDE IN HIS COUNTRYMEN

SHOCKED BY THE SUDDEN DESTRUCTION OF HIS LEADER'S CRAFT THE SECOND E-BOAT'S COMMANDER ISSUED URGENT ORDERS
HIMMEL! WE HAVE BEEN DUPED HARD A STARBOARD! STAND OFF A THOUSAND METRES!

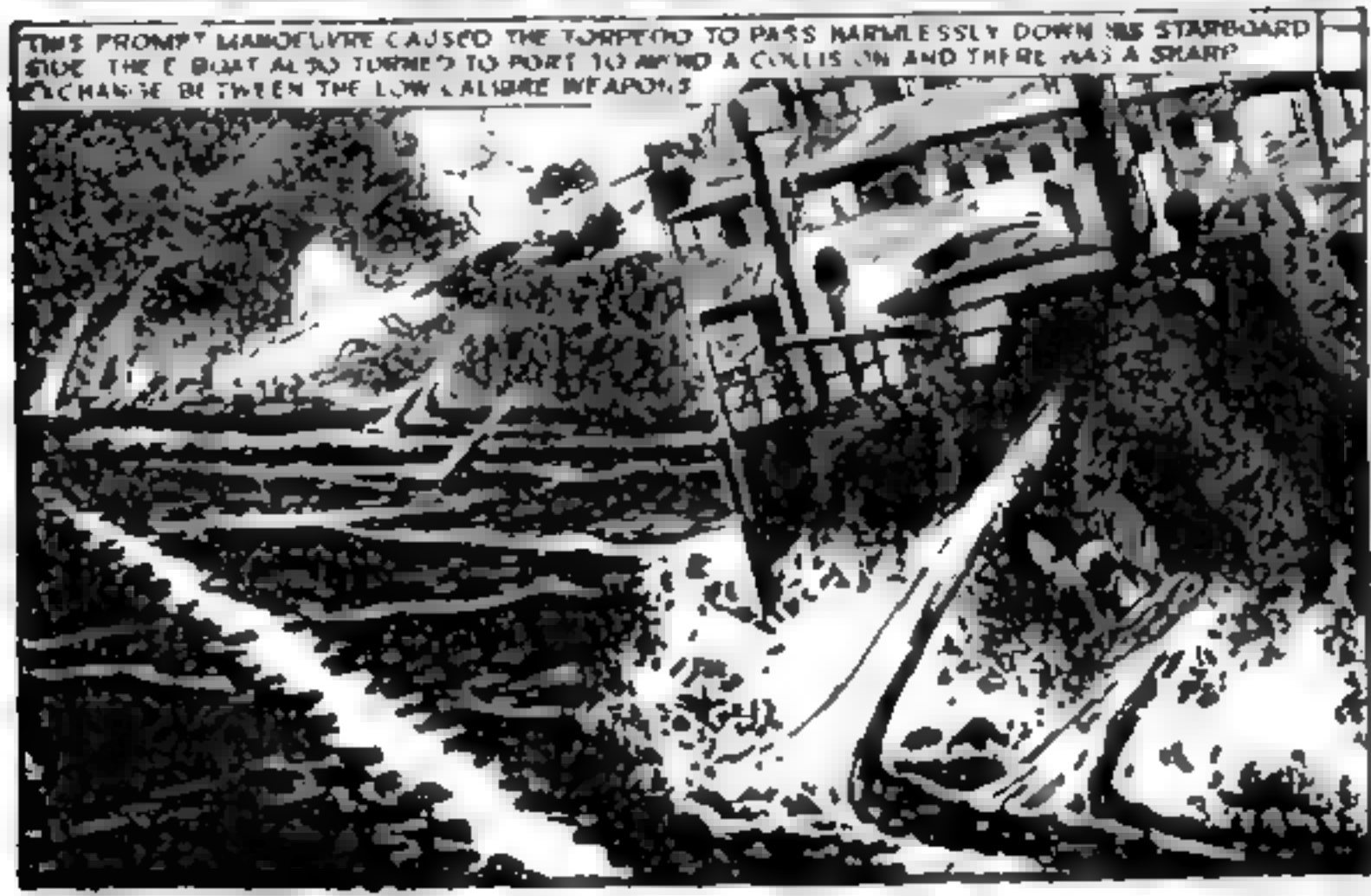
FOR A SHORT NERVE WRACKING INTERVAL THE FRENCHMEN FOLLOWED THE ENEMY'S MANOEUVRE
IT SEEMS THE NEXT MOVE MUST BE OURS, BONNARD IT WOULD BE CALAMITOUS IF THEY ESCAPED!
MAN THE FORWARD FOUR-INCH! FIRE A RANGING SHOT, THEN SINK THE BOCHE!

THE E-BOAT COMMANDER MUST HAVE GIVEN HIS ORDERS AT ALMOST THE SAME INSTANT. THE LEAN CRAFT HEELED SHARPLY TO PORT AND THE RANGING SHOT PASSED WELL ASTERN
CURSE THEM! I KNEW THEY'D HAVE OTHER TRICKS TO PLAY. STAND BY, STARBOARD AND PORT TORPEDO TUBES!


EVEN AS THE FORWARD FOUR INCH GUN'S CREW ADJUSTED THE RANGE THE E BOAT FIRED ITS STARBOARD TORPEDO IT WAS SET ON A COURSE A FEW YARDS AHEAD OF MARIE LOUISE'S BOWS
CUT SPEED TO HALF AHEAD BOTH!
IF HE REACTS LIKE I THINK HE WILL, WE'LL GET HIM!

IN CUTTING HIS SPEED DUPONT APPEARED TO HAVE PLAYED INTO THE E-BOAT COMMANDER'S HANDS FOR HIS PORT TORPEDO SLICED TOWARDS THE SHIP'S MIDSHIPS
TORPEDO ON THE STARBOARD BEAM!

ALTHOUGH UNVERSED IN THE ARTS OF WAR DUPONT WAS A SUPERB SEAMAN HE REACTED TO THE NEW EMERGENCY WITHOUT HESITATION
FULL AHEAD, PORT ENGINE! HELM HARD A STARBOARD!


THIS PROMPT MANOEUVRE CAUSED THE TORPEDO TO PASS HARMLESSLY DOWN HIS STARBOARD SIDE THE E BOAT ALSO TURNED TO PORT TO AVOID A COLLISION AND THERE WAS A SHARP EXCHANGE BETWEEN THE LOW CALIBRE WEAPONS

THE E BOAT SURVIVED THE CLOSE RANGE FUSILLADE AND AS IT RACED AWAY ITS COMMANDER DECIDED TO SUMMON ASSISTANCE

TELL THE WIRELESS OPERATOR TO STAND BY TO SEND A MESSAGE

GET THAT FOUR-INCH TO BEAR ON THE DOUBLE IT'S OUR LAST CHANCE!

THE AFTER FOUR INCH CREW HIT THE FAST RECEDING E BOAT WITH THEIR SECOND SHOT BLOWING IT OUT OF THE WATER THE *MARIE-LOUISE'S* DECKS RANG TO CHEERS OF TRIUMPH

BRAVO! GOOD SHOOTING!

LET US HOPE THEY DID NOT GET AN ALARM OUT

THE GUNNER'S HAND
I AM HAPPY TO HAVE

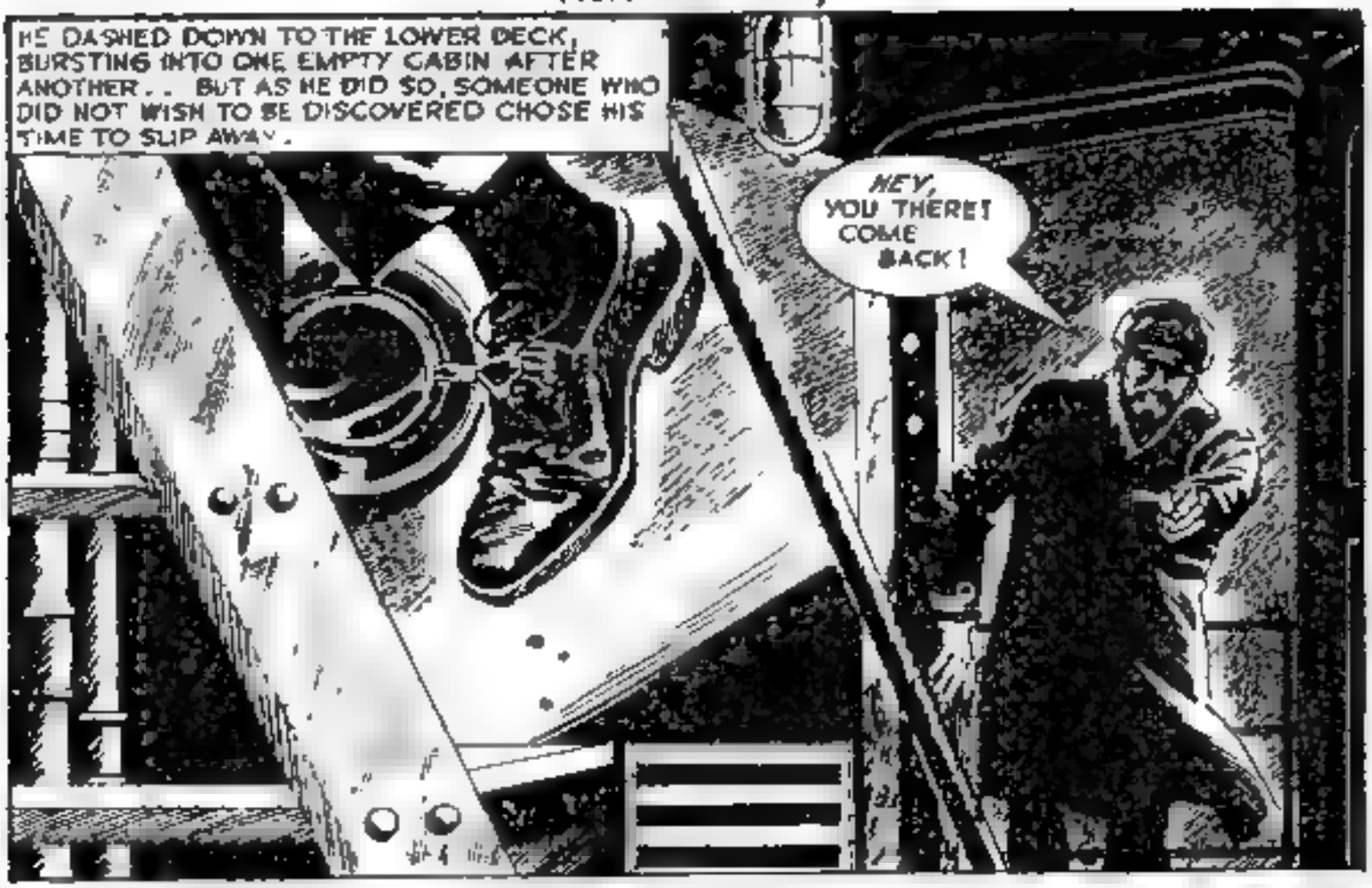
SO YOU FOUGHT AGAINST THE GERMANS, AFTER ALL, CHARLES
BUT WHAT ELSE COULD I DO ?

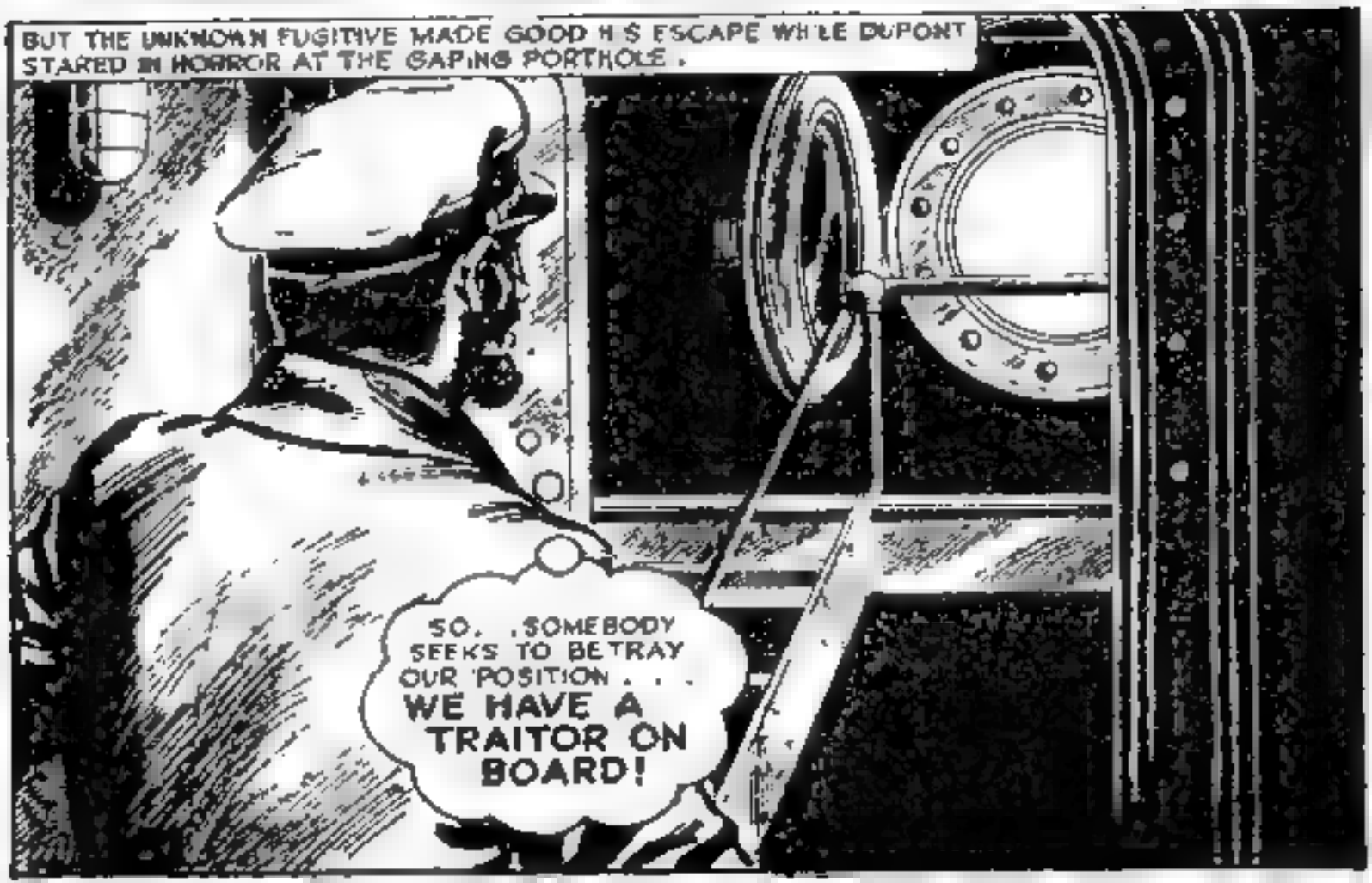
ARNAUD'S EYES WERE HARD AND ACCUSING . . .
THEY MUST HAVE KNOWN THE JEAN-ESTELLE WAS ELSEWHERE YOU SHOULD HAVE TOLD THEM THE TRUTH . . . THAT THIS IS THE MARIE-LOUISE!

DISTURBED BY HIS FRIEND'S WORDS, DUPONT SENT ARNAUD BELOW TO REST, WHILE HE MADE ANOTHER EFFORT TO REASON THINGS OUT FOR HIMSELF . . . ALONE
WHAT SHOULD TRUE FRENCHMEN DO . . . SURRENDER TO THE GERMANS LIKE THE GOVERNMENT TOLD THEM . . . OR FIGHT ON WITH STUBBORN COURAGE LIKE THESE GUNNERS?

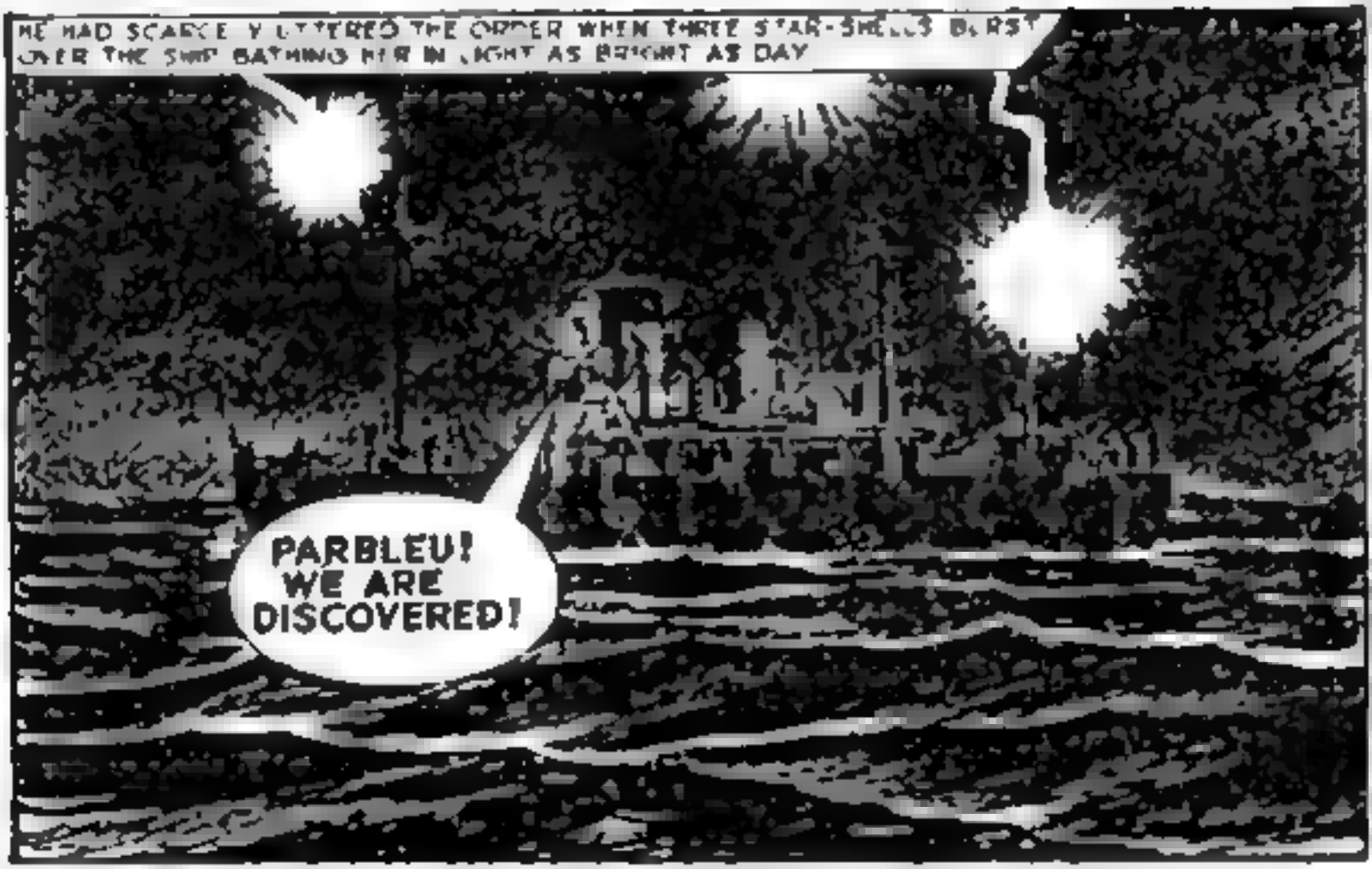
HALF AN HOUR LATER, DRAMA STRUCK AGA N .
SIGNAL LAMP FLASHING TO PORT, SIR!
IT MUST BE MEANT FOR US THERE'S NO OTHER SHIP IN THE VICINITY . AS FAR AS WE KNOW. .

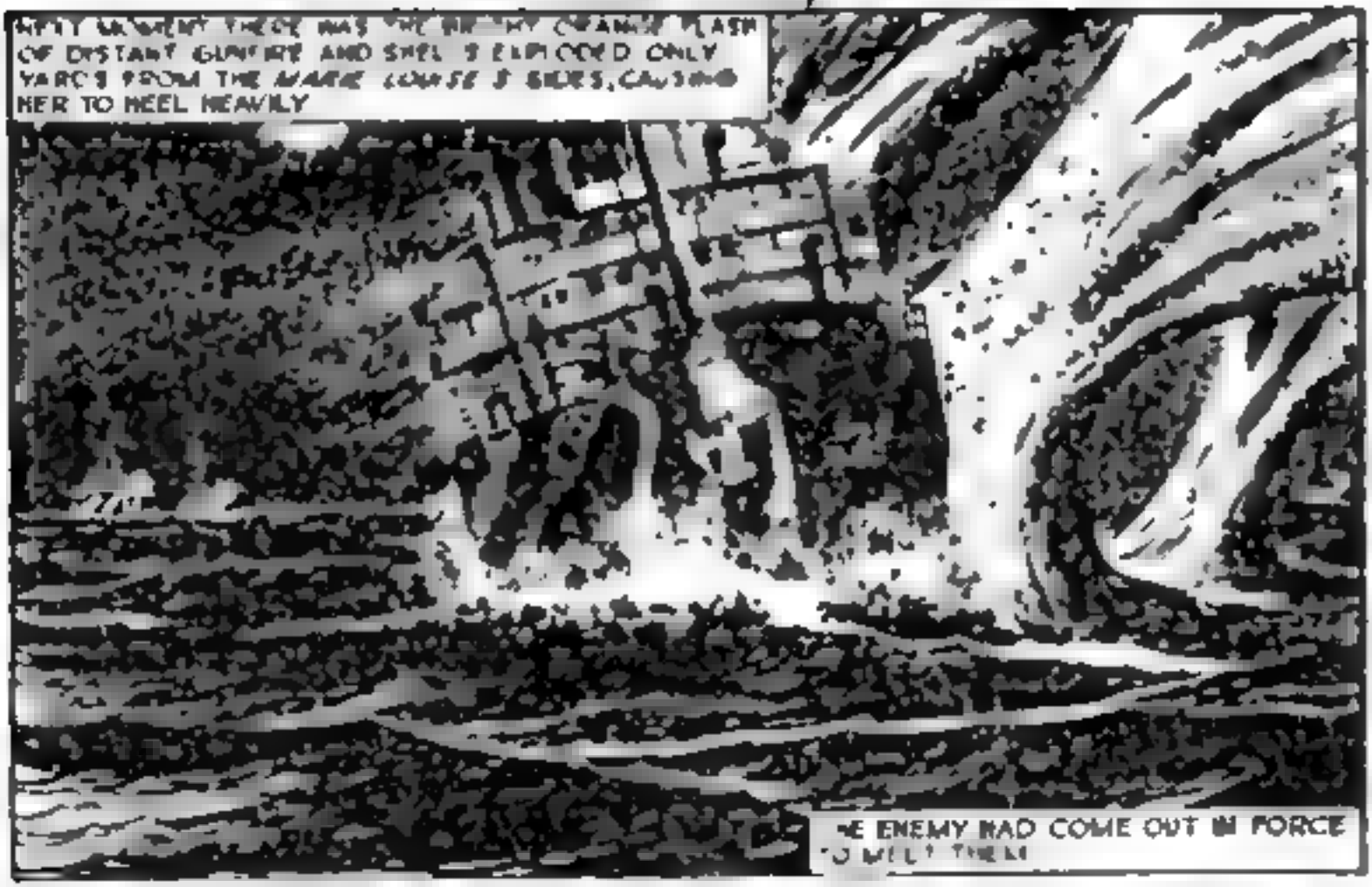
DUPONT STRODE ANXIOUSLY TO THE END OF THE BRIDGE AND SUDDENLY CAUGHT SIGHT OF A RAY OF LIGHT SHINING FROM SOME-WHERE DOWN HIS OWN SHIP'S SIDE. DISMAYED, HE STRODE TOWARDS THE BRIDGE LADDER . . .
SOME FOOL HAS LEFT A PORT HOLE OPEN! KEEP YOUR GLASSES ON THE SIGNAL I'M GOING BELOW TO INVESTIGATE.


HE DASHED DOWN TO THE LOWER DECK, BURSTING INTO ONE EMPTY CABIN AFTER ANOTHER . . BUT AS HE DID SO, SOMEONE WHO DID NOT WISH TO BE DISCOVERED CHOSE HIS TIME TO SLIP AWAY .
HEY, YOU THERE! COME BACK!


BUT THE UNKNOWN FUGITIVE MADE GOOD HIS ESCAPE WHILE DUPONT STARED IN HORROR AT THE GAPING PORTHOLE .
SO. . SOMEBODY SEEKS TO BETRAY OUR POSITION . . . WE HAVE A TRAITOR ON BOARD!

DUPONT CLOSED THE SCUTTLE AND THE CABIN DOOR HE RETURNED TO THE BRIDGE WITH AN OMINOUS FEELING THAT THINGS WERE ABOUT TO HAPPEN TO THE MARIE LOUISE OVER WHICH HE HAD NO CONTROL
CALL BOTH WATCHES OF THE HANDS TO.. TO ACTION STATIONS!


HE HAD SCARCE UTTERED THE ORDER WHEN THREE STAR-SHELLS BURST OVER THE SHIP BATHING HER IN LIGHT AS BRIGHT AS DAY
PARBLEU! WE ARE DISCOVERED!


NEXT MOMENT THERE WAS THE BRIGHT ORANGE FLASH OF DISTANT GUNFIRE AND SHELL'S EXPLODED ONLY YARDS FROM THE MARIE LOUISE'S SIDES, CAUSING HER TO HEEL HEAVILY
THE ENEMY HAD COME OUT IN FORCE TO MEET THEM

A SEARCHLIGHT BLAZED FROM OUT OF THE DARKNESS AND A SMOOTH VOICE BROKE THE STARTLED SILENCE ON THE BRIDGE OF THE MARIE LOUISE . . . IT WAS ARNAUD'S.
THE GAME'S UP, MES AMIS! WE ARE ABOUT DUE FOR AN ULTIMATUM.
ARNAUD! SO, IT WAS YOU. . . I MIGHT HAVE GUESSED!

Violent Destiny

Chapter 3. Freedom—or Death!

AT GESTAPO HEADQUARTERS JEAN ARNAUD THE TRAITOR, MADE NO ATTEMPT TO CONCEAL HIS CONTEMPT FOR HIS OWN COUNTRYMEN
IT SEEMS YOUR COUNTRYMEN NEVER SUSPECTED YOU, MY DEAR ARNAUD?
WHAT SORT OF FRENCHMAN IS THIS WHO DELIVERS US INTO THE HANDS OF OUR COUNTRY'S CONQUERORS!
NEVER HERR KOMMANDANT, THIS ONE, THE SKIPPER IS FROM MY NATIVE VILLAGE WHERE THERE ARE MANY SUCH SIMPLETONS.

JEAN ARNAUD SWAGGERED OUT OF THE OFFICE AS THE INTERROGATION BEGAN, IGNORING THE VENOMOUS LOOKS FLUNG AT HIM BY HIS FELLOW FRENCHMEN
SO.. YOU LEFT ENGLAND ONLY WISHING TO SAIL HOME TO YOUR NATIVE VILLAGE HOW IS IT THAT ON THE WAY YOU SANK TWO GERMAN FIGHTING SHIPS?
THE ACTION WAS FORCED UPON ME! WE WERE ATTACKED WITHOUT WARNING!

AS THE GERMAN CONTINUED TO BAIT HIM WITH ACID SARCASM AND SCARCELY VEILED THREATS, DUPONT FELT A TREMENDOUS UPSURGE OF ANGER WITHIN HIMSELF SUCH AS HE HAD NEVER EXPERIENCED BEFORE.
ARNAUD HAS ALREADY TESTIFIED THAT YOU SAID YOUR SHIP WAS THE JEAN-ESTELLE! WHY DON'T YOU ADMIT YOU WERE ON A VITAL OPERATION AGAINST THE THIRD REICH?
THINK WHAT YOU LIKE, HERR KOMMANDANT, I DO NOT CARE!
WELL SPOKEN, MON CAPITAINE!
BONNARD'S COMMENT BROUGHT A SWIFT REPRISAL FROM A BURLY GUARD.
IF I EVER MEET YOU ON EQUAL TERMS, MY BRAVE BOCHE I'LL FIX YOU SLOWLY...

DUPONT'S ANGER SEEMED TO CAUSE THE KOMMANDANT A CERTAIN CYNICAL AMUSEMENT BUT HE WAS TIRED OF BAITING HIS PRISONER
IS THAT THE WAY THE NAZIS TREAT THEIR PRISONERS OF WAR? YOU... YOU...
BRAVE WORDS FOR A SO-CALLED NEUTRAL . TAKE HIM AWAY. TAKE THEM ALL AWAY WE HAVE PLENTY OF TIME TO DEAL WITH THEM AT OUR LEISURE

DUPONT WAS DULY DRAGGED OFF AND HURLED INTO A BLOCK OF CELLS TO THE REAR OF THE BUILDING A FEW SECONDS LATER BONNARD WAS PROPELLED INTO IT AFTER HIM
PIGS! DOGS! CARRION...

ARNAUD WAS RIGHT ABOUT ME IN ONE WAY. I'M ALL KINDS OF A FOOL, AND I'VE DISCOVERED THE WILL TO FIGHT...
TOO LATE!

BENEATH HIS BLUFF EXTERIOR, BONNARD WAS A GOOD JUDGE OF MEN. HE FIGURED THAT DUPONT, POSSESSED BY HIS PRESENT COLD FURY, WOULD BE CAPABLE OF ALMOST ANYTHING.
IF I COULD ESCAPE, I'D CRASH THE *MARIE-LOUISE* INTO THOSE BLAST PENS, SINGLE-HANDED ...OR DIE IN THE ATTEMPT!
I BELIEVE YOU WOULD, MON AMI... I BELIEVE YOU WOULD!

THE GUNNER STOOD UP...HE EYED DUPONT SHREWDLY...
SEND FOR ARNAUD THE TRAITOR, MON CAPITAINE. IF HE THINKS YOU WISH TO PLEAD WITH HIM FOR HIS SUPPORT, HIS VANITY WILL MAKE HIM COME!
AND THEN, BONNARD?
AND THEN... WE SHALL SEE!

THE STOLID GERMAN SENTRY CAME UNWILLINGLY WHEN DUPONT CALLED. HE HEARD THE MESSAGE IN HALTING GERMAN, HOWEVER, AND RETURNED TO DELIVER IT

FIVE ENDLESS, NERVE-WRACKING MINUTES DRAGGED BY. THEN THERE WAS THE SOUND OF JACK-BOOTS IN THE PASSAGE TO THEIR SURPRISE, ARNAUD APPEARED IN THE UNIFORM OF A GERMAN LEUTNANT
WELL, WHAT DO YOU WANT, MY FOOLISH FRIEND... HAVE YOU DECIDED TO CHANGE SIDES?

FULL OF CARELESS ASSURANCE, ARNAUD TURNED HIS BACK ON THE PRISONERS AND DISMISSED THE GUARD. BONNARD FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO CURB HIS IMPATIENCE.
ALL RIGHT, HANS, YOU CAN CLEAR OFF, THERE'LL BE NO TROUBLE HERE.
DON'T BE TOO SURE, YOU STUPID TURKEY-COCK!

BONNARD CAUGHT DUPONT'S EYE ..AND SAW AN ANSWERING SPARK OF RESO..TION WITH THE SPEED OF A JUNGLE CAT HE SPRANG AT ARNAUD CATCHING HIM BY THE THROAT
HIS PISTOL FIRST CAPITAINE, THEN WE ... BORROW HIS ..OTHES
LISTEN, ARNAUD ..ONE SQUEAK OF ALARM FROM YOU . . . AND YOU DIE, LIKE THE TREACHEROUS RAT YOU ARE!

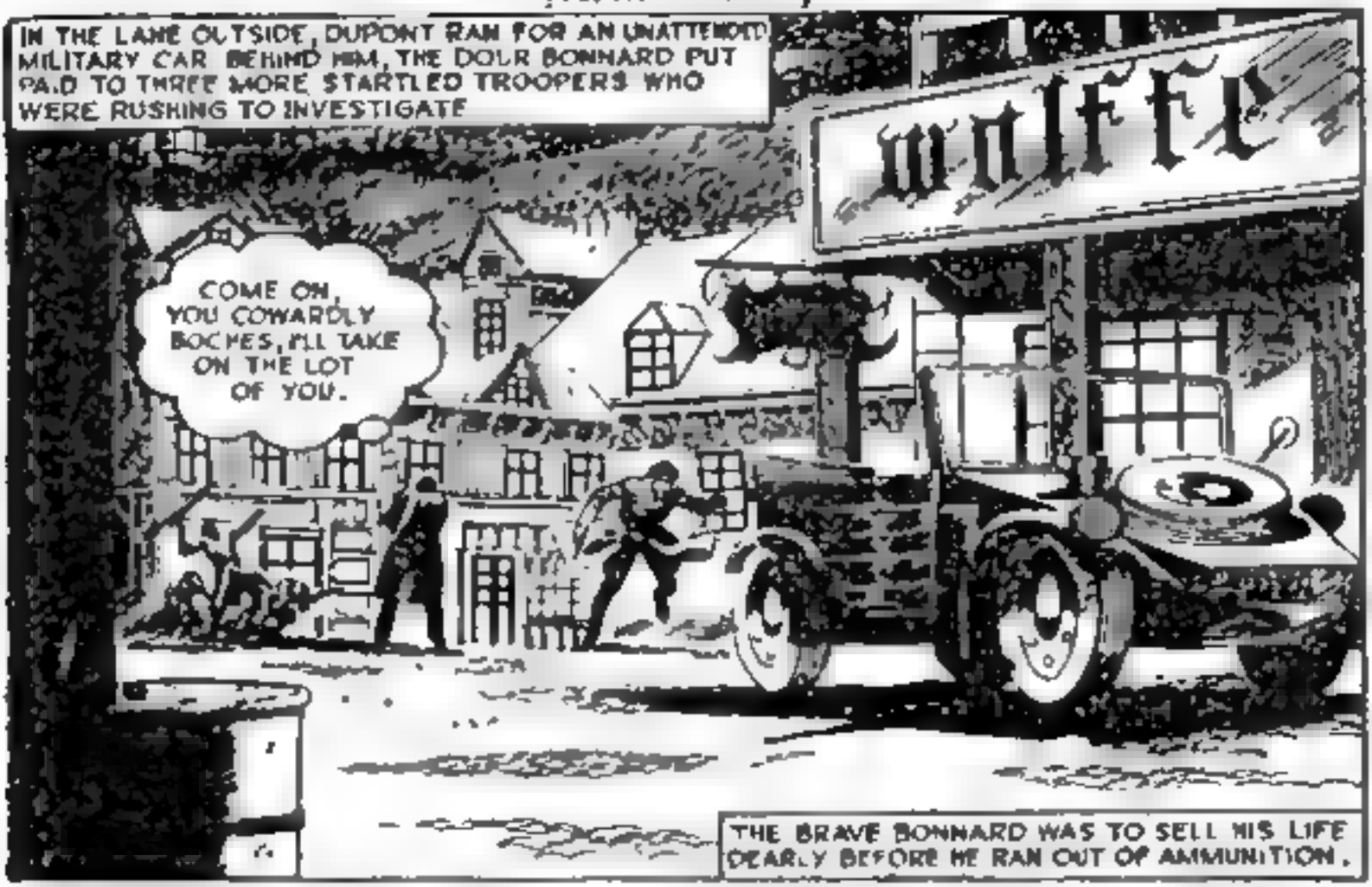
WORKING AGAINST TIME DUPONT STRUGGLED INTO THE GERMAN UNIFORM, W.. ..HE TERRIFIED ARNAUD WAS UNCEREMONIOUSLY PUSHED INTO HIS BELIEF
DON'T WORRY MON CAPITAINE, HE'LL DO HIS STUFF!
YOU WERE MARVELLOUS BONNARD ..LL STEP OUT INTO THE PASSAGE IN A MOMENT THEN YOU'LL HAVE TO GET OUR FRIEND TO CALL THE GUARD TO LOCK UP.

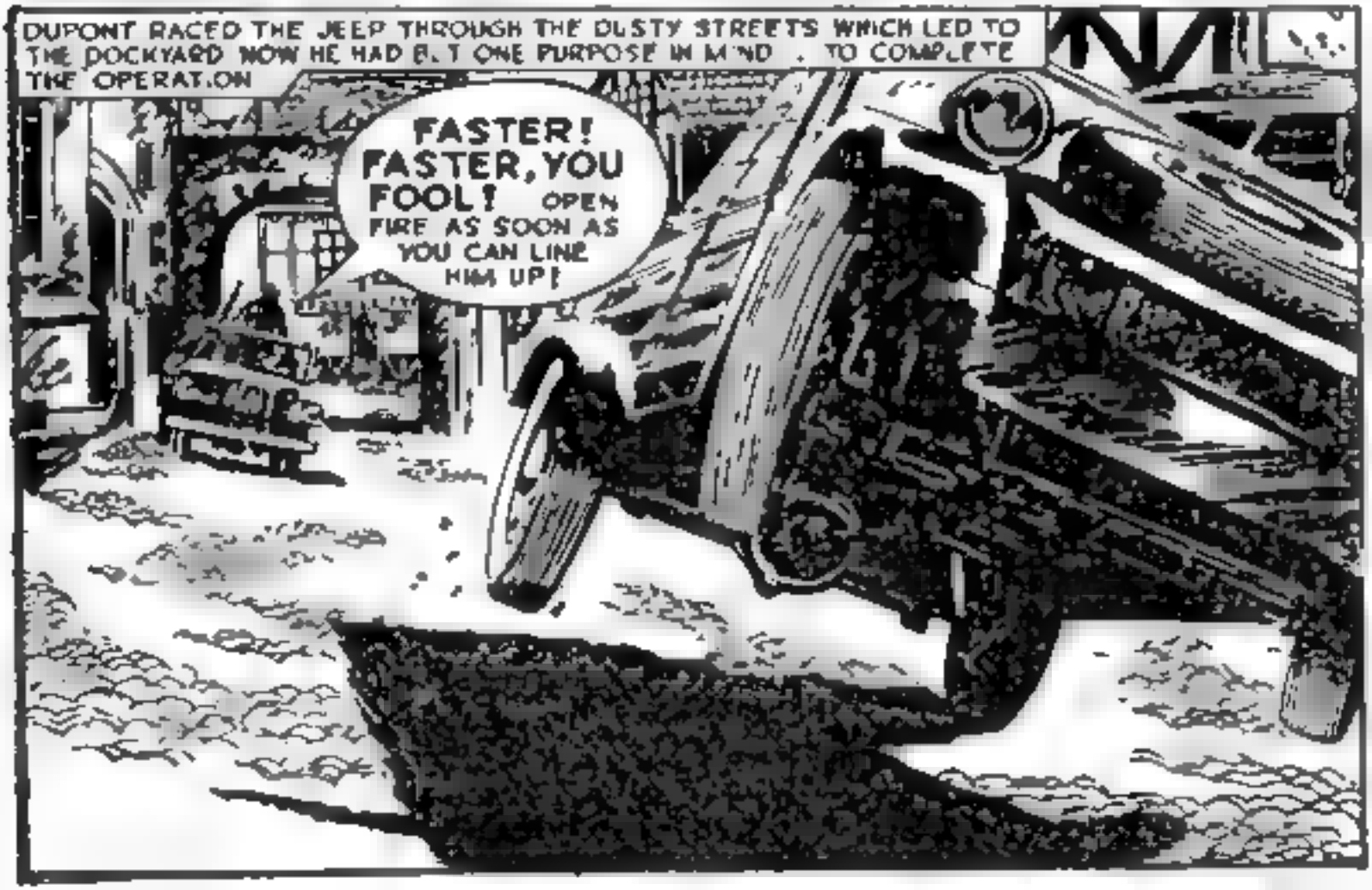
THE UNSUSPECTING GUARD CAME TO THE DOOR IN ANSWER TO ARNAUD'S URGENT CALL
THAT DIDN'T TAKE LONG, HERR LEUTNANT!
NOW WE'LL THIS MY FRIEND.

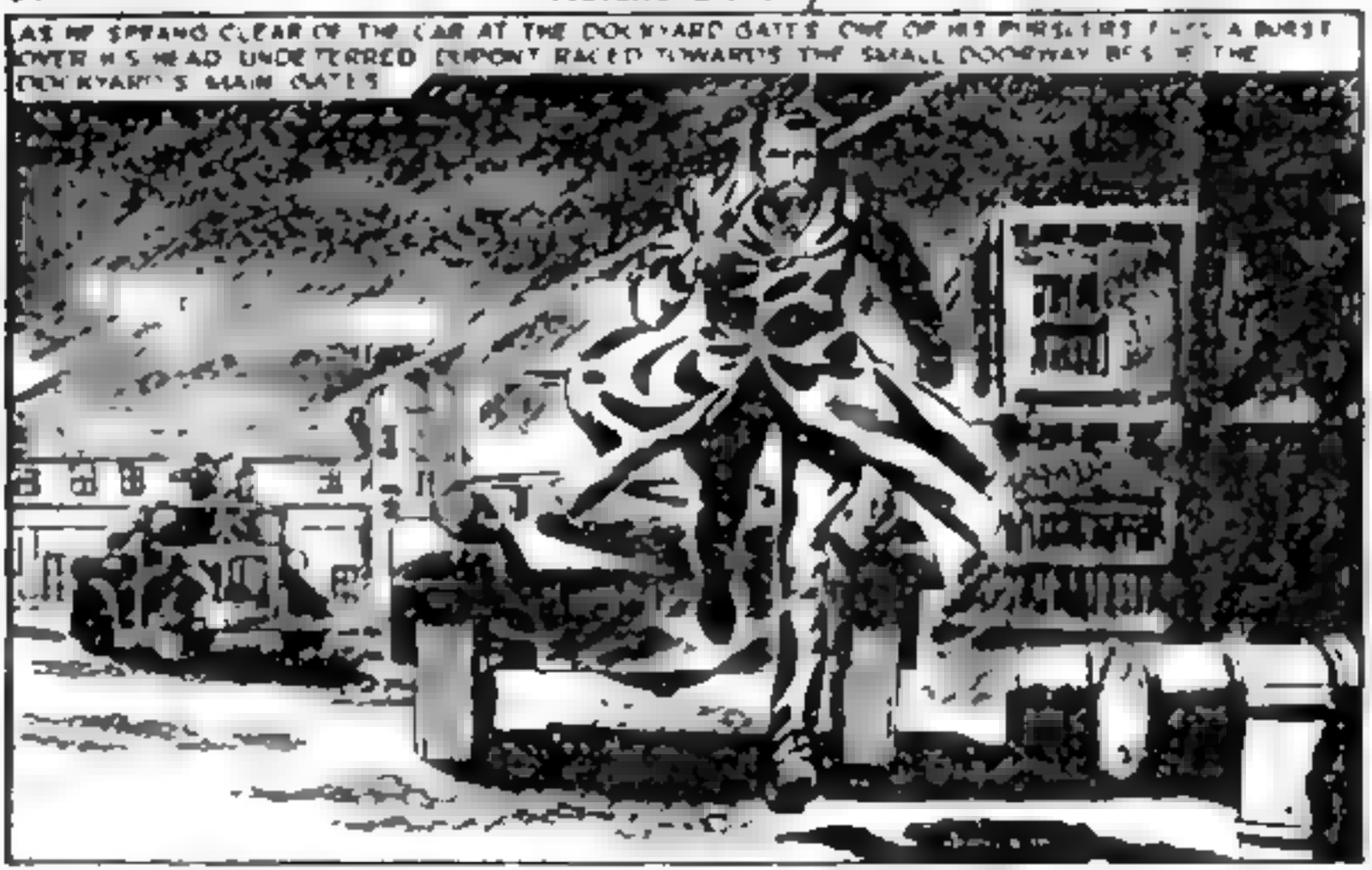
ON POINT [illegible] GUARD WITH A PULVERISING RIGHT HOOK AT THE SAME TIME ARNAUD BEGAN TO YELL
UGH!
HELP! GUARDS, HELP!

WITH ONE ACCURATE SHOT, DUPONT SILENCED THE TRAITOR FOREVER.
SO DIE ALL TRAITORS!

WHILE THE SOUND OF THE SHOT STILL ECHOED ROUND THE GRIM OLD BUILDING, THE TWO DESPERATE ESCAPERS RACED TOWARDS THE OUTER DOOR AT THE END OF THE CORRIDOR. . .
RUN FOR IT, MON CAPITAINE! I'LL COVER YOU. BON CHANCE, MON AMI!


IN THE LANE OUTSIDE, DUPONT RAN FOR AN UNATTENDED MILITARY CAR BEHIND HIM, THE DOUR BONNARD PUT PAID TO THREE MORE STARTLED TROOPERS WHO WERE RUSHING TO INVESTIGATE
COME ON, YOU COWARDLY BOCHES, I'LL TAKE ON THE LOT OF YOU.
THE BRAVE BONNARD WAS TO SELL HIS LIFE DEARLY BEFORE HE RAN OUT OF AMMUNITION.


DUPONT RACED THE JEEP THROUGH THE DUSTY STREETS WHICH LED TO THE DOCKYARD NOW HE HAD BUT ONE PURPOSE IN MIND . TO COMPLETE THE OPERATION
FASTER! FASTER, YOU FOOL! OPEN FIRE AS SOON AS YOU CAN LINE HIM UP!

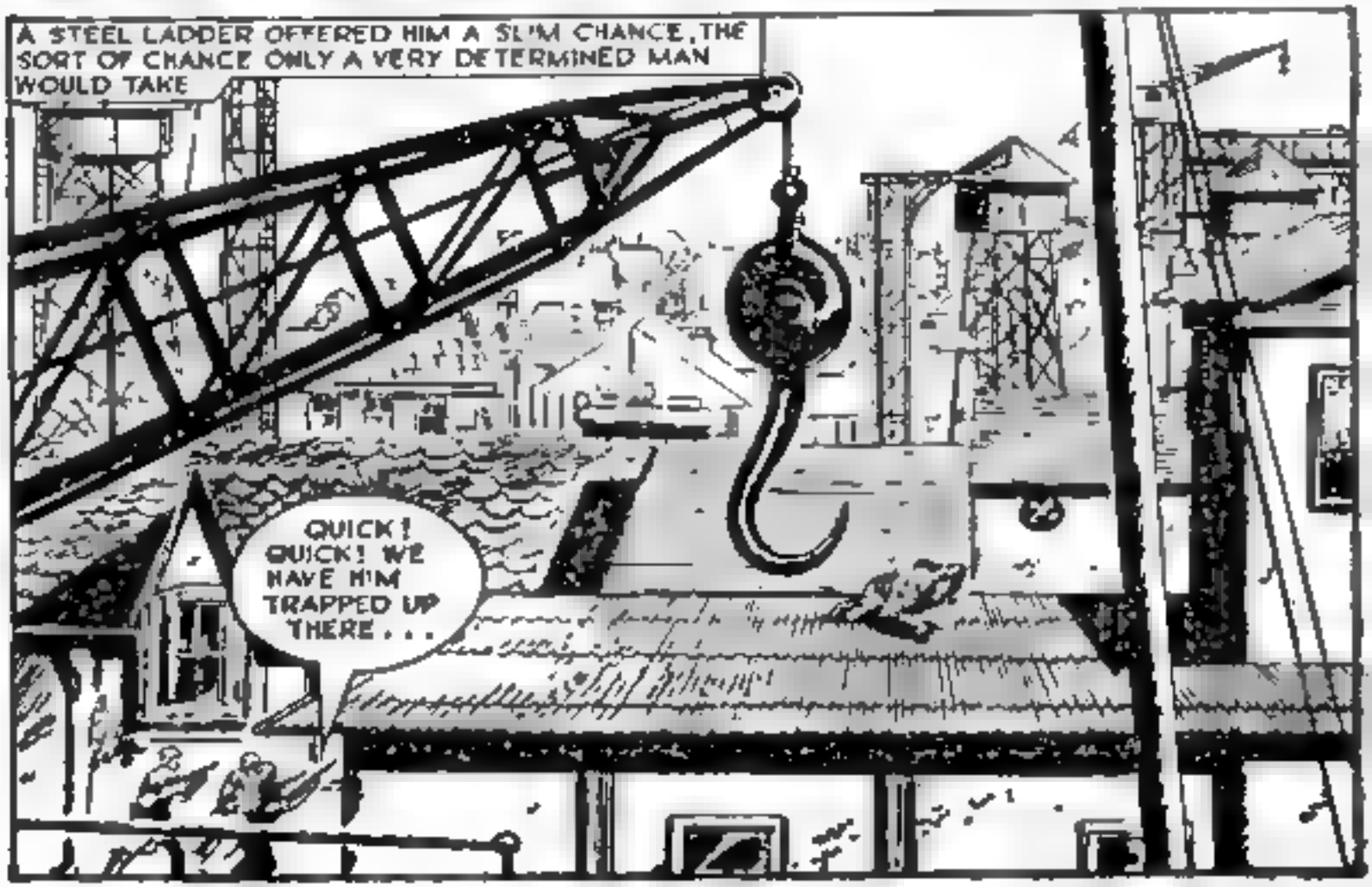

AS HE SPRANG CLEAR OF THE CAR AT THE DOCKYARD GATES ONE OF HIS PURSUERS FIRED A BURST OVER HIS HEAD UNDETERRED DUPONT RACED TOWARDS THE SMALL DOORWAY BESIDE THE DOCKYARD'S MAIN GATES

SUDDENLY HE FOUND HIMSELF FACED BY FOUR STARTLED GERMAN GUARDS
ONE OF THE FRENCH PRISONERS HAS ESCAPED, UP THE FIRST ROAD ON THE RIGHT. AFTER HIM!

THE PURSUING CAR SCREAMED TO A HALT LESS THAN HALF A MINUTE LATER GOADED BY THEIR OFFICER THE TROOPERS HURLED THEMSELVES THROUGH THE GATEWAY IN PURSUIT
THEY'LL NEVER TAKE ME ALIVE
GET A MOVE ON HE MUSTN'T REACH THE FRENCH STEAMER. SOME OF YOU OTHERS HEAD HIM OFF ROUND THE BUILDING

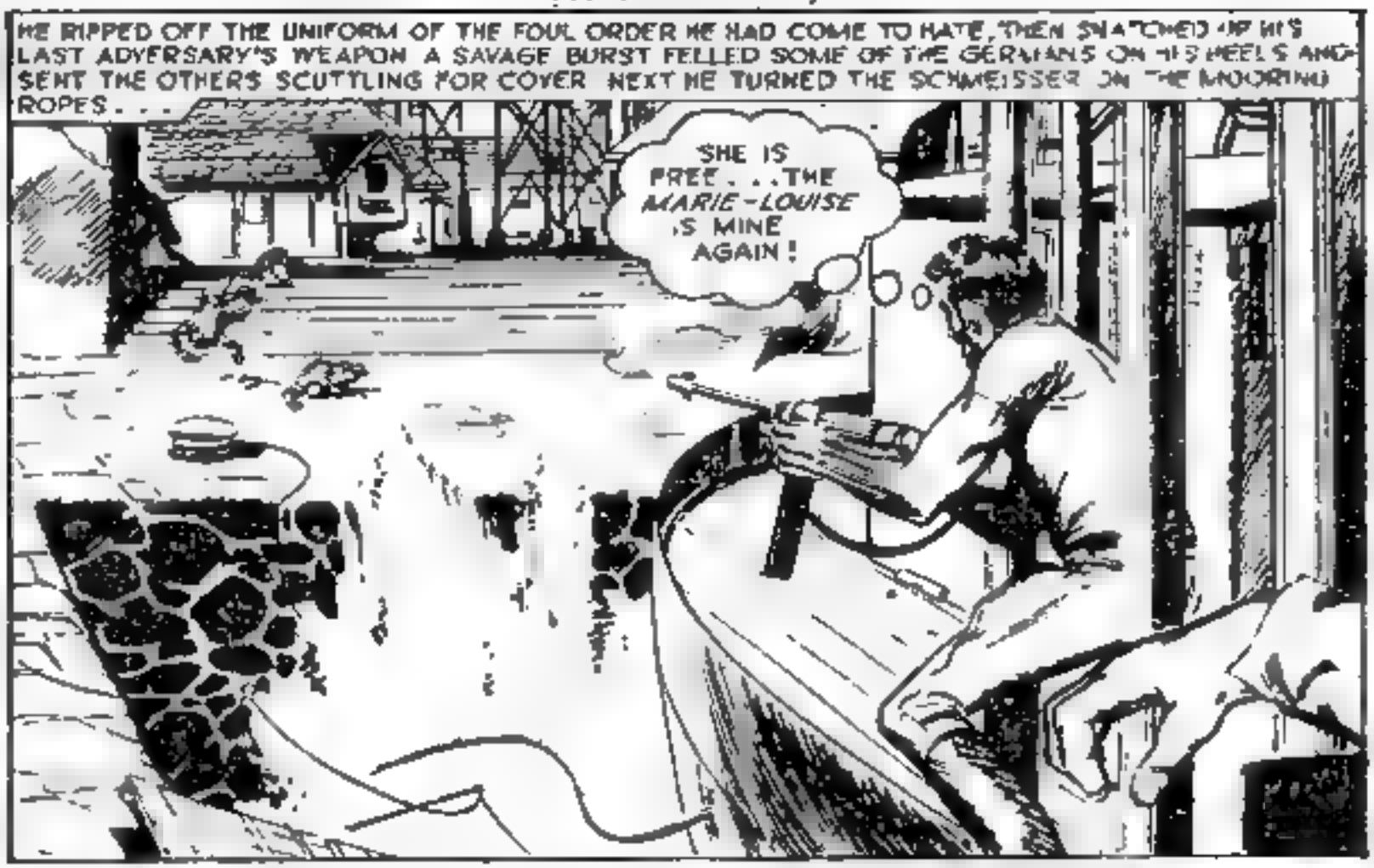
DUPONT DARTED ON PAST THE WAREHOUSE ROUNDING THE NEXT BUILDING HE SPOTTED THE [illegible] BUT SEVERAL SOLDIERS WERE BETWEEN HIM AND THE SHIP
NOW WHAT DO I DO? THEY'VE HEADED ME OFF!

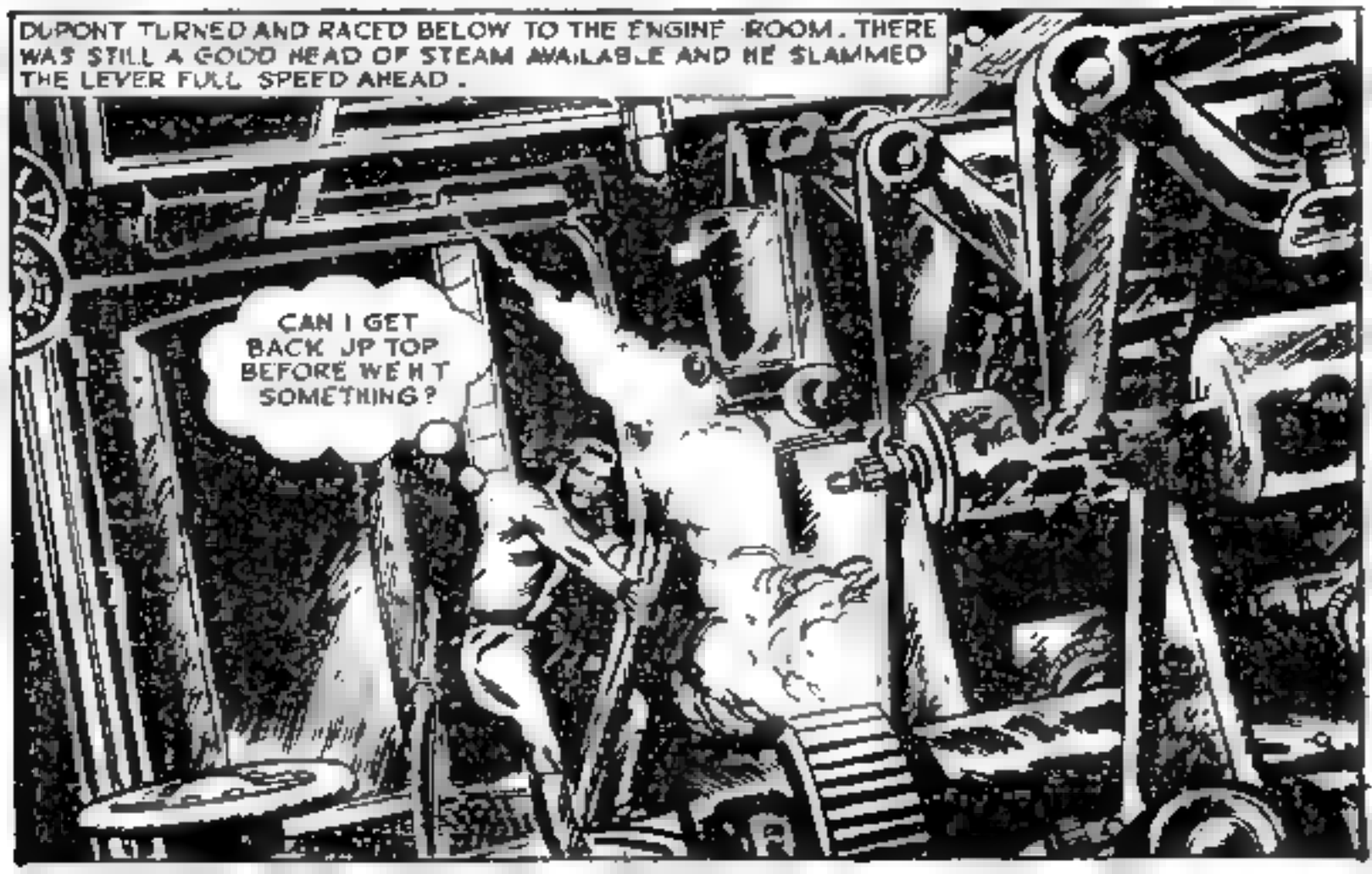
HALF WAY ALONG THE NEXT BLOCK, DUPONT PULLED UP SHORT. SOLDIERS HAD ROUNDED THE CORNER AHEAD OF HIM AND HE SNAPPED A QUICK SHOT AT THEM
LET'S GET HIM. HE CAN'T HAVE MANY SHOTS LEFT!
THE FRENCHMAN LOOKED ABOUT HIM DESPERATELY. . . HE WAS CORNERED.


A STEEL LADDER OFFERED HIM A SLIM CHANCE, THE SORT OF CHANCE ONLY A VERY DETERMINED MAN WOULD TAKE
QUICK! QUICK! WE HAVE HIM TRAPPED UP THERE . . .

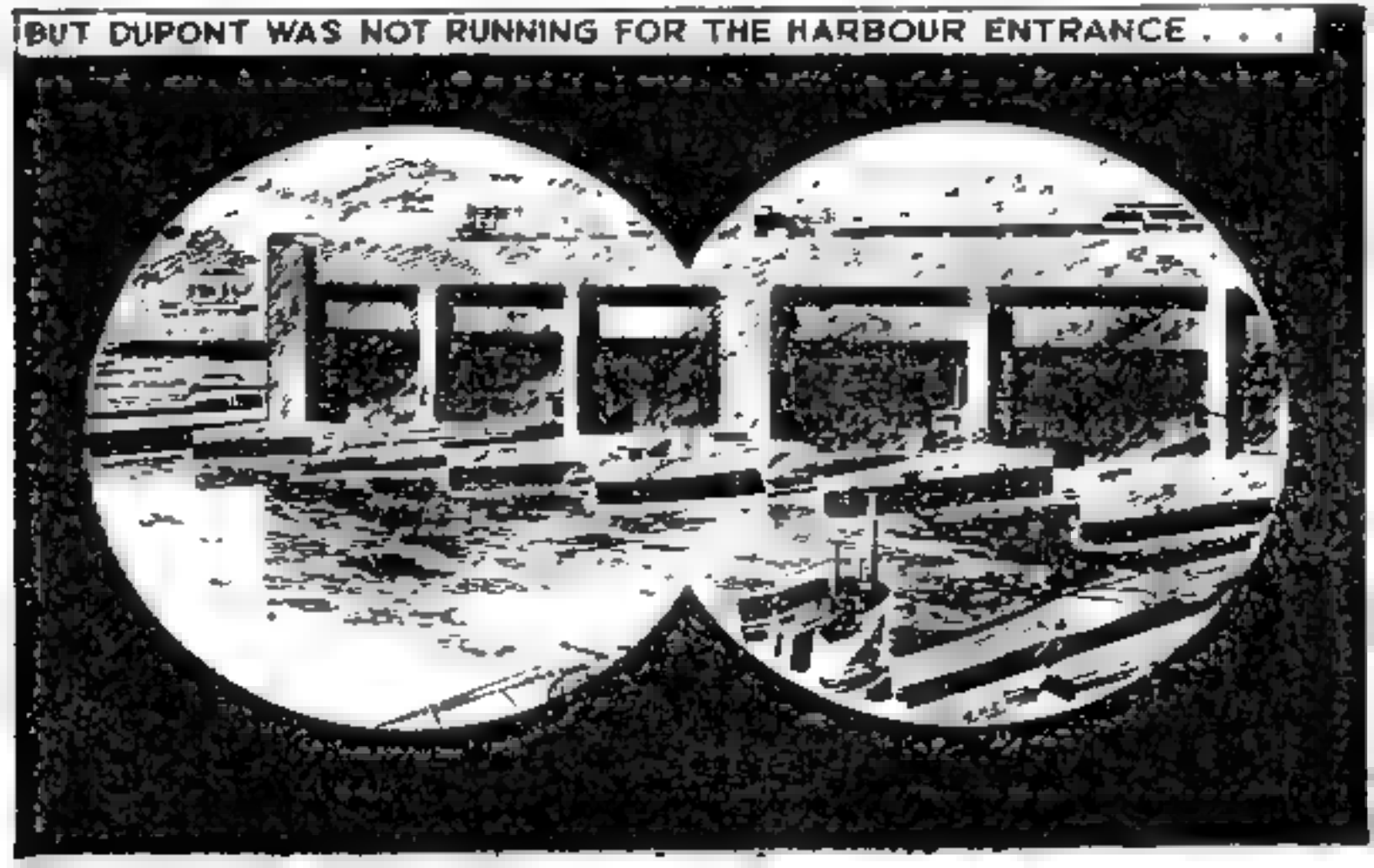
DUPONT SCRAMBLED ACROSS THE ROOF OF THE BUILDING THE HARSH, BRUTAL CRIES AND THE BOOTS CLANKING ON THE LADDER HELPED HIM SCREW UP HIS COURAGE.
MARIE LOU

LUCK AND DARING MADE THE SLIM CHANCE PAY OFF.

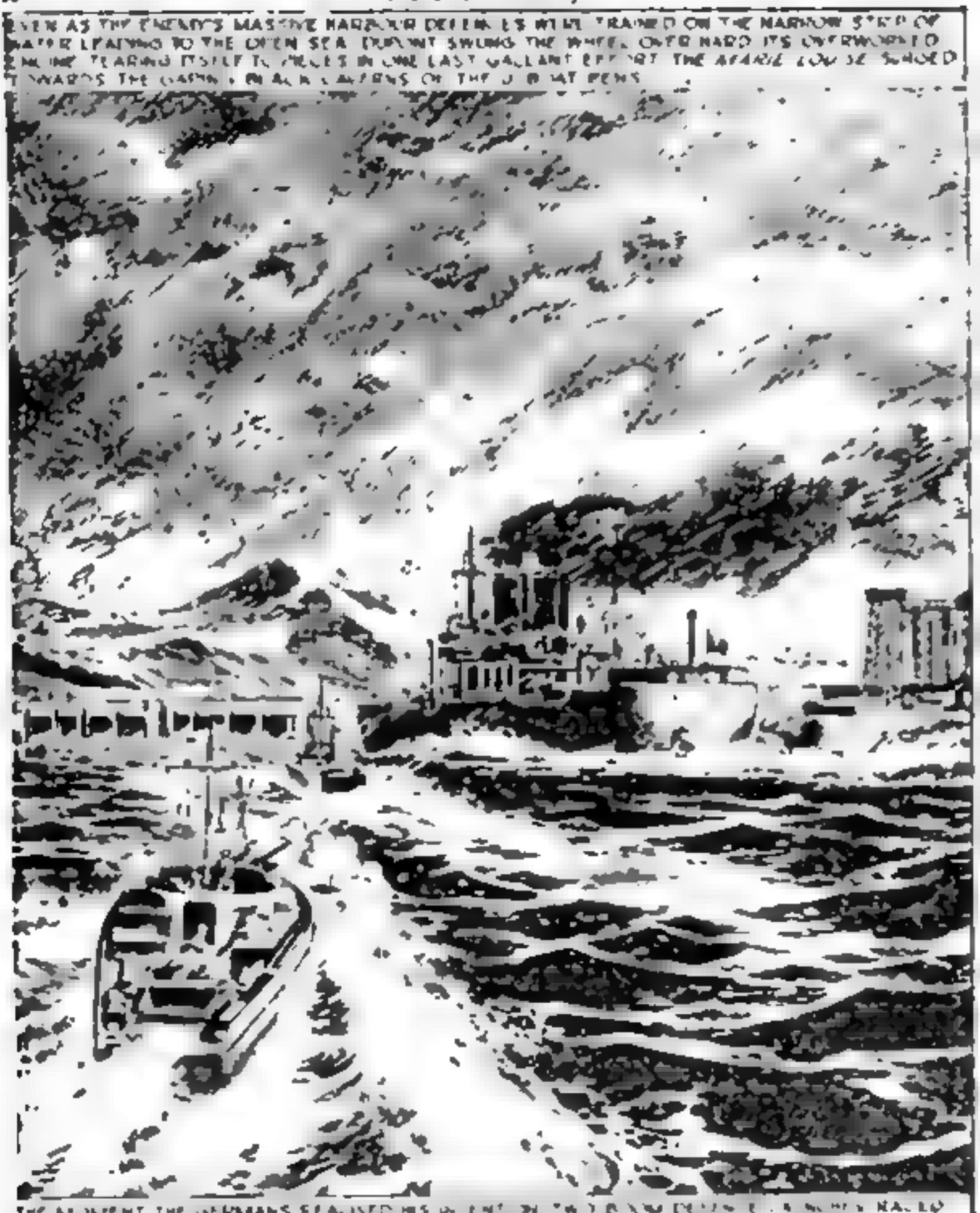

HE RIPPED OFF THE UNIFORM OF THE FOUL ORDER HE HAD COME TO HATE, THEN SNATCHED UP HIS LAST ADVERSARY'S WEAPON A SAVAGE BURST FELLED SOME OF THE GERMANS ON HIS HEELS AND SENT THE OTHERS SCUTTLING FOR COVER NEXT HE TURNED THE SCHMEISSER ON THE MOORING ROPES . . .
SHE IS FREE . . . THE MARIE-LOUISE IS MINE AGAIN !


DUPONT TURNED AND RACED BELOW TO THE ENGINE ROOM. THERE WAS STILL A GOOD HEAD OF STEAM AVAILABLE AND HE SLAMMED THE LEVER FULL SPEED AHEAD .
CAN I GET BACK UP TOP BEFORE WE HIT SOMETHING ?

GASPING FOR BREATH, HE FLUNG HIMSELF INTO THE WHEELHOUSE IN TIME TO STEER THE SHIP AWAY FROM THE JETTY TOWARDS WHICH IT WAS HEADING. INSTANTLY A HAIL OF ENEMY SMALL ARMS FIRE SWEPT THE SHIP.
YOU CROSS EYED BABOONS! CAN NONE OF YOU AIM STRAIGHT! SCHNELL! RUN TO THE HARBOUR MASTER. WARN HIM TO CLOSE THE BOOM DEFENCE AND CALL THE COASTAL ARTILLERY. THEY'LL GET HIM NEAR THE ENTRANCE.


BUT DUPONT WAS NOT RUNNING FOR THE HARBOUR ENTRANCE . . .

EVEN AS THE ENEMY'S MASSIVE HARBOUR DEFENCES WERE TRAINED ON THE NARROW STRIP OF WATER LEADING TO THE OPEN SEA, DUPONT SWUNG THE WHEEL OVER HARD. ITS OVERWORKED ENGINE TEARING ITSELF TO PIECES IN ONE LAST GALLANT EFFORT, THE *MARIE LOUISE* SURGED TOWARDS THE GAPING BLACK CAVERNS OF THE U-BOAT PENS.



THE MOMENT THE GERMANS REALISED HIS INTENTION, TWO BOOM DEFENCE LAUNCHES RACED ACROSS THE WATER IN A FLUMIO OF FOAM, THEIR GUNS LASHING THE SHIP'S BATTERED SUPERSTRUCTURE.

THE HEAVY CALIBRE COASTAL GUNS WERE ALREADY SWINGING SHOREWARDS, THE GUN-LAYERS STRIVING TO LOWER THEIR SIGHTS SUFFICIENTLY TO HIT THE TARGET ALMOST UNDER THEIR NOSES.
TEN MORE YARDS AND THE SW NE WILL BE WITHIN THE ANGLE OF OUR GUNS. GET THOSE SIGHTS DOWN, YOU FOOLS!..DOWN, I SAY!
THE MANIAC IS HEADING FOR THE J BOAT PENS, HERR HAUPTMANN!

IMPERVIOUS TO THE GROWING FORCES OF DESTRUCTION AROUND HIM, DUPONT AIMED THE MARIE-LOUISE UNWAVERINGLY FOR THE MIDDLE OF THE PENS EIGHT, NINE, TEN YARDS FURTHER AND THE ENEMY'S BIG WEAPONS BEGAN TO SLAM SHELLS INTO THE SHIP.
GOOD! THAT HIT THE BRIDGE...BUT WE HAVE NOT STOPPED THE SHIP CONTINUE FIRING!

CHARLES DUPONT HAD BEEN HURLED TO THE CORNER OF THE BRIDGE BY THE [illegible] THE EXPLOSION. BADLY SHAKEN AND BLEEDING FROM [illegible] DUPONT DRAGGED HIMSELF ACROSS THE DEBRIS BACK TO THE WHEEL
YOU'VE LEFT IT TOO LATE!

AS FACE A MASK OF AGONISED DETERMINATION, DUPONT STEADIED THE SHIP ON COURSE. THEN THE SECOND SALVO OF SHELLS STRUCK HOME.

A THIRD DEVASTATING SALVO HIT THE *MARIE-LOUISE*, TEARING GREAT HOLES IN HER SIDES, WRECKING WHAT LITTLE THERE WAS LEFT OF HER SUPERSTRUCTURE AND CAUSING A PRONOUNCED LIST. . .
BUT HER MOMENTUM STILL CARRIED THE *MARIE-LOUISE* FORWARD, RELENTLESSLY CLOSING THE DIMINISHING GAP BETWEEN HERSELF AND HER TARGET. THERE WAS A MIRTHLESS GRIN OF SAVAGE SATISFACTION ON THE DOOMED FRENCHMAN'S FACE. . .
THIS IS FOR BONNARD. . . AND THE REST OF THE CREW. . . OLD PAPA LIMARD AND ALL THE OTHERS UNDER THE NAZI HEEL!

AND IN ONE HUGE CATASTROPHIC EXPLOSION THE HEAVILY PROTECTED PENS AND THEIR RESIDENT U-BOATS WERE COMPLETELY DESTROYED. THE GALLANT FRENCHMAN, CHARLES DUPONT, HAD FOUND AT LAST THE WILL TO FIGHT FOR FREEDOM . . . TO THE DEATH!

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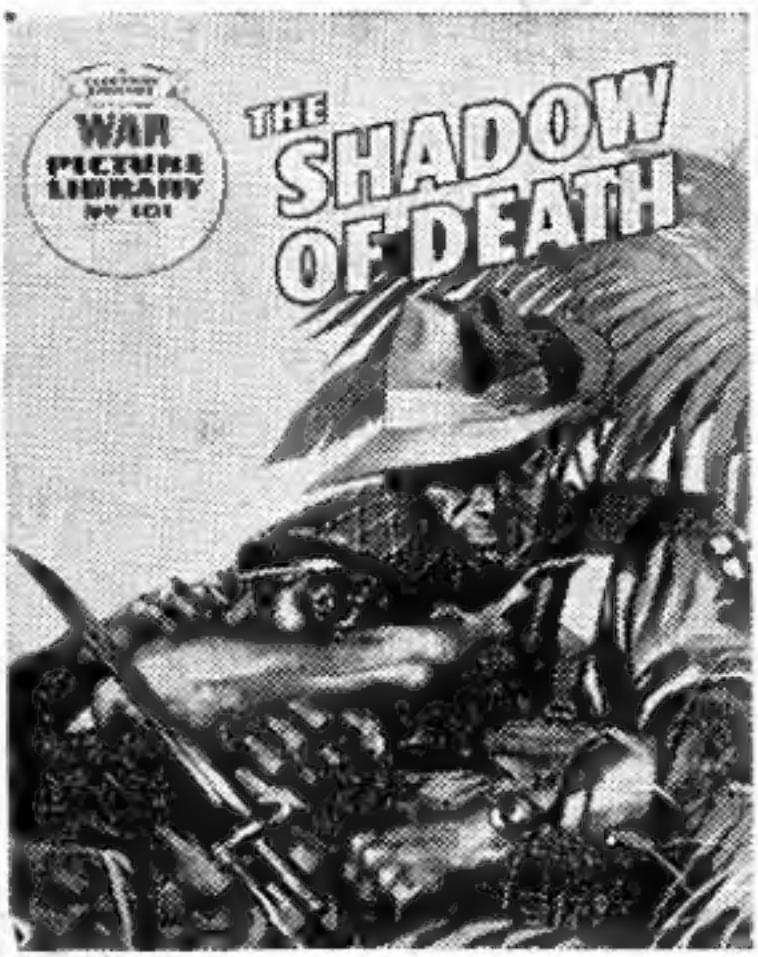

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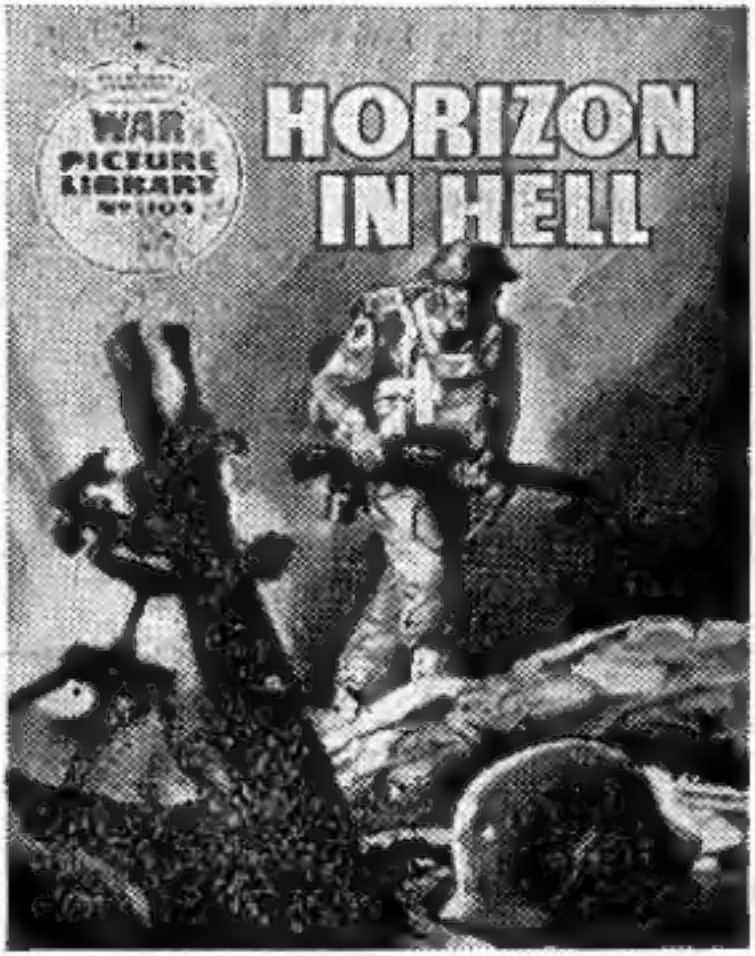

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